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*AUSTIN DOBSON: SOME LETTERS FROM
HIS FRIENDS.*

BY ALBAN DOBSON.

I. 1867-1878.

DURING his latter years Austin Dobson was inclined to find his possessions rather a burden to him. From time to time he would set himself the impossible task of setting his affairs in order. First he would want to sell his books, which latterly became too numerous to be conveniently handy for reference, and I can well remember devoting at least one Bank Holiday to going through a partially completed card catalogue, and with him marking those which might be sold. Then he would become intrigued with the idea of arranging his correspondence—not that it was by any means in a state of disorder, but he scarcely ever destroyed a letter, and from time to time he felt the need for a little more space in his already overcrowded study. His eyesight was, however, rapidly failing, and the task of looking through books or reading old letters soon became wearisome, so that nothing really effective was ever completed during his lifetime.

For my own part, as the executor primarily responsible for the management of his literary estate, I am not sorry that things were left as they were. Arrangement might have led to a process of thinning by destruction, and the letters from his friends constitute an invaluable historical commentary both on himself and his work, as well as on that of his contemporaries, and make, I venture to think, not uninteresting reading.

I have taken therefore the somewhat unusual course of placing on record, in a few papers of which this is the first, some representative examples of letters which it is hoped may be of general interest, covering as they do a wide ground. That I should refrain—except to a limited extent—from taking the more natural course of publishing letters written by my father himself, is due to a variety

of reasons. To attempt to collect such letters from a host of recipients generally ends in a somewhat scrappy result, and would not, I think, have commended itself to an author who left strict injunctions to his executors that he was opposed to any sort of Memoir. Moreover, the great mass of letters written by my father were of a nature unlikely to appeal to the mass. Not that he could not write a most amusing letter, but the majority were written in connection with his work on the eighteenth century, and contained information, usually of a detailed character, in reply to the endless inquiries that were showered upon him by all and sundry, who were only too willing to tap this unfailing source of eighteenth-century lore. For the present, therefore, I confine myself to letters from his friends.

These may be divided into two groups. The more important, and naturally those of an appreciatory nature, are laid down in two large bound volumes, which my father regarded as heirlooms. Although they were only fully completed up to about 1901, various loose letters have been added from time to time, to bring the record more or less up to date.

The remainder of his correspondence was more or less unsorted and very bulky. I went through the whole of it after his death, only destroying the more unimportant and formal documents; even so, hundreds and hundreds of intensely interesting letters remain.

For the moment I propose to deal with a few letters representative of those to be found in the bound volumes above referred to. Later on I shall have recourse to the rest of the main correspondence, but I should like to take this opportunity of thanking those who have freely allowed me to quote the various letters printed in this and the succeeding papers. In many cases, however, where the writers have died, I have been unable to trace any source to which I might properly apply for the necessary permission, and in these cases I hope I may escape the charge of having printed anything to which the writers or their representatives, whoever they may be, could take exception.

The correspondence begins so far back as 1867, and the first letter I quote is one from Mr. Alexander Macmillan, to whom my father had evidently sent a batch of his earlier poems in case they could be accepted for *Macmillan's Magazine*. It is dated March 13, 1867, and reads :

'I am very much obliged to you for sending me your poems. Those after the Italian seem to me very clever, though to tell the truth it does seem to me rather a waste of time to imitate, or make

attempts to revivify what surely now is very dead, and which it seems to me doubtful if it were ever very much alive. The "Death of Lancelot" too is a pretty reproduction. I care much more for the "Landlady," and were it not that our space is very crowded at present I would have been tempted to ask our Editor if he could find a corner for it. But, poor man, his look of despair alarms me. He has so many friends who have the literary and poetic faculty.

'I return them by this post. I confess that my feeling is that it would be well for you to wait for a time before attempting much in the way of publication.

'I would suggest your sending "My Landlady" to *Once a Week*. It is the most cultured of our weeklies.'

What happened to 'My Landlady' (the poem above referred to) in the immediate future is not clear, but it ultimately appeared in the *Nautical Magazine* for December 1872. The 'Death of Lancelot' was no doubt an early version of 'The Dying of Tanneguy du Bois,' which is dealt with in the following letter, dated March 7, 1868, from Anthony Trollope, who had already accepted 'Une Marquise' for publication in *St. Paul's Magazine*, the first of a long series of poems to appear in that magazine:

'I return your poems, though I like them much, especially that of the dying knight, because, as it seems to me, they are not sufficiently clear in their expression for the general readers of a magazine. The general reader would have no idea for instance why "There is no bird in any last year's nest." . . .

'I think it is indispensable that poetry for a magazine should be so clearly intelligible that ill-instructed, uneducated, but perhaps intelligent minds can comprehend it. I hope you will forgive me, if you do not agree with me.'

No doubt this letter alludes to a *very* early version of 'The Dying of Tanneguy du Bois,' which finally appeared in 'Under the Crown' in June 1869. Most of my father's admirers put this poem with its haunting refrain very high in order of merit.

In a letter dated October 8, 1868, the same writer accepts 'The Story of Rosina':

'Certainly we will have Boucher,—which is admirable, and not a stanza too long. The feeling of it is excellent, and the execution generally very happy. There is no doubt about our having it. . . .'

Then, of course, come the less agreeable remarks, a criticism or two as to points, 'which, however, I will leave to your judgment.'

' . . . I return the MS.—but will have it printed as soon as you have looked to these things.

'I know I am sticking pins into you by my remarks ;—but whatever is an Editor to do ?'

I purposely omit a good deal of this letter, as it would be unintelligible without the poem before one, but the criticisms were so detailed as to indicate an unusual patience on the part of an editor who was evidently not prepared to adopt one of the simple alternatives, acceptance or refusal. So far as it is possible to judge, all the writer's suggestions were accepted.

On December 8, 1869, Anthony Trollope wrote :

'I lunched yesterday with my dear friends George Eliot and G. H. Lewes,—as to whom you will at any rate know who they are. I regard them as the two best critics of English poetry (or prose) whom I know. They were very loud in their praise of your *Autumn Idyll*, and George Eliot asked me to let the Author know what she thought of it.'

The poem in question had just appeared in *St. Paul's Magazine*.

For the next two or three years there is little to record by way of correspondence. The poet's output was considerable, and the large proportion of his poems continued to appear in *St. Paul's*, although his friend Anthony Trollope appears to have severed his connection with the magazine some time in 1870.

In 1873 my father published 'Vignettes in Rhyme,' his first volume of poems, and this undoubtedly brought him in touch with a wider circle of admirers and correspondents.

On November 13, 1873, began a correspondence with Frederick Locker which continued without intermission for many years. On that day he wrote :

'One line to tell you that I have now finished your book, and that I like it very much. I lent it to Mr. Tennyson, and I assure you he was greatly pleased with it. He spoke of your talent, your sensibility, and the lightness of your touch as remarkable, and such words of praise from him are valuable, as he is a conscientious, and I am bound to say a fastidious critic.

'I will confess to you that when I put down your book, I took up my lyrics and was struck with one peculiar difference between them. It was like passing from Piccadilly in November to Kensington Gardens in May. I do not say that perhaps there may not be some people who will go on liking poor old Piccadilly the most, I for instance ! and I hope that there will : but still I feel that your charming book will be, and ought to be, the more popular

especially with women, whom it is so delightful to please, and who are so useful in blowing the trumpet of a man's fame.

'Come and see me some day in going to or returning from your office.'

To this is added a postscript: 'I do not think you have any more sincere admirer than myself.'

On February 28, 1874, Mr. Locker wrote again:

'I told Mr. Theodore Martin to look at your book, at the Club, and he was so pleased with it that he bought a copy. The other day the Queen asked him to recommend her some books, and he lent her his copy of your book, which she has not returned! So we presume She likes it as well as he does! but he does not like to lose his book, and he said something about buying another copy. I think he would be much flattered if you wrote his name on a copy, and sent it to him in Onslow Square, but do not do this if there would be the *slightest* difficulty.'

It is clear that the suggestion was carried into effect. At all events an intermittent correspondence with Mr. (afterwards Sir) Theodore Martin ensued, and my father became the possessor of a good many inscribed copies of the latter's works.

I shall allude later to the appreciation which Queen Victoria showed for my father's poems, but the present is perhaps a convenient place to record an interesting remark attributed to 'Carmen Sylva' when Queen of Roumania. William Le Queux in his recent book, 'Things I know' (1923), quotes the Queen as having said to him: 'I love Austin Dobson's poems, and "The Sundial" most of all. I have tried to model some of my own verses after the lines he has taken, with, alas! but poor success, I fear.'

From the following letter, dated May 18, 1874, from Augusta Webster, a fellow-craftswoman, I only quote a portion:

'I did not thank you at once for your vignettes because I was waiting to have read and re-read them. Such is my honesty that I always read a book (or as much of it as is possible to weak human nature) before acknowledging the receipt of it—you may imagine with what perplexing consequences sometimes. However, I had no fear as to your "cherrystones."

'Much of your book is dainty, tender, fine pointed poetry, and all of it is full of happy touches and of perfect workmanship. My husband has been reading it with much enjoyment, and yesterday I was reading several choice poems of it to him to the satisfaction

of both of us. I regret to say that he wound up our literary afternoon by taking a book of my own and falling asleep over it, which might well be supposed to lessen my faith in the keenness of his critical powers for the day, but as his opinion of your poems agreed with mine, I take it as a judicious one.

"Aegrotus" and "Before Sedan" certainly seem to be (as poems, not cherrystones) the gems of the book, but we both took a great fancy to the old gentleman and old lady.¹ "Dorothy" also is a lovely little piece with not too much or too little said—though really your induction is not scientifically creditable when you infer a whole woman and her whole life (for that is what it comes to) out of the fact of a name being scratched on a pane. The portrait so pleases and touches me, however, that, as I am not scientific, I forgive you for it.

'That saying neither too much nor too little seems to be your particular gift, and it includes a power of always suggesting a thought just a little deeper than your words. I don't mean a thought one thinks oneself through a sequence of ideas, but one of which you are distinctly the author.'

The remainder of the letter contains a criticism of the poem the 'Drama of the Doctor's Window.' The allusion above to 'cherrystones' appears obscure at first sight, and I should have had no clue to it but for the fact that my attention was recently called to a book by E. F. Benson about his family. The author is describing a conversation between his father, the Archbishop, and Robert Browning, in the course of which the question of my father's poetry was raised. Apparently Browning had no use for lyrical poetry, and expressed the opinion that my father's verse was rather like 'carved cherrystones.' Until I saw this anecdote in Mr. Benson's book, I was not aware that it had been made public property before, but, from the letter above, the remark was evidently current at the time.

The next letter of importance is one addressed by Lord Lytton to Anthony Trollope, who evidently gave it to my father to keep. It is dated Paris, May 19, 1874, and reads :

'I am most grateful to you for the kind gift of "Vignettes in Rhyme." Forgive me, if in spite of what you told me of the book, I have read it with pleasant surprise. If I were not writing to-night late on the eve of my departure for England at 5 A.M. to-morrow morning, and very tired, I should inflict upon you a long and detailed

¹ 'The Gentleman (and the Gentlewoman) of the Old School.'

account of my impressions. But this let me say at least—and at once. I think there is in this little book a new, genuine and delightful individuality in verse not only of great promise but also of such indisputable accomplishment that it is a shame—either to our critical press, or to myself—that it was not made known to me before you kindly introduced me to it.

‘The man who wrote this book must be a *man*—and not merely a verse machine. To me at least it has been most refreshing, and very delightfully so, to find the spontaneous lyric note, in company with *true* sentiment, and observation of, and sympathy with, human type, as well as wholly free from the damnable affectation and grimace of our modern bards.

‘I think there is here a genuine spring of pure running water, *immediately* distinguishable from all the hydraulic spoutings which, for a while, pass for improvements on the old Castalian.

‘I shall hope and expect more of it. But if the writer writes no more than he has written already, he will have done excellent work.’

Among others whose attention was attracted by ‘*Vignettes in Rhyme*’ was Edmund Yates, who on August 4, 1874, wrote :

‘I should be very glad if you could occasionally let me have some Society verses for publication in the *World*. They should be à propos of the season of the year, or some subject of the day.’

It would not, however, appear that this suggestion was ever carried into effect.

As I have suggested above, there is no doubt that ‘*Vignettes in Rhyme*’ met with a very warm reception at the hands of the public. The reviews were so uniformly good that one wonders how a book like this would have sold under present-day circumstances, when there are such vast opportunities for advertising and broadcasting. Apparently by 1875 ‘*Vignettes in Rhyme*’ had penetrated to America, for on April 17, 1875, Oliver Wendell Holmes writes as follows :

‘If I should tell you how much pleasure your little volume of poems has given me by summing up in one epithet all the various exclamations of delight with which I finished one poem after another, you would be startled with my superlatives.

‘I did—what you and I do not always do—I read every poem in the little book, for after reading the first I found I was dealing with a *maestro* who touched his slender instrument with the rarest grace, finish and feeling. It would be hard to find more perfect

poems of their kind, and their kind is perhaps something higher than the modest title you have given them would lead the reader to suppose. I will not criticise them severally, for though I might select my favourites—and I hardly know which I would choose at this moment—they are so uniformly admirable in their different ways that I should probably end by thinking the last one I read was the best. Take the two first as pictures ; take the "Virtuoso" for its exquisite and most delicate satire ; take the tender sentiment of the "Sundial" with its shadowy suggestiveness—any one of these (and I do not know how many more) seems to me, I will not say perfect, because perfection is not human, and these poems are deliciously human, but too nearly perfect for me to find fault with.

'I remember reading the "Sundial" reprinted somewhere and being very much impressed by it, not knowing its authorship.

'Do let me say too that I love verses written as a gentleman should write, whether the gentleman was called Horatius Flaccus or by an English name. The "odi ignobile" is the one sacrifice to Christianity which comes hardest to me.

'There are two or three small coincidences in your book with published poems of mine which rather pleased. I have "vignettes" as a title in my volume of poems ; one poem called "Avis," beginning "I may not *rightly* call thy name" ; another entitled "Dorothy Q" (to a portrait of my great-grandmother as a girl, Dorothy Quincey). I am hoping to publish a new edition of my poems in the course of the year, and I shall be happy to send you a copy. In the meantime I will send you my last little volume.'

The next letter is from the American poet Edmund Clarence Stedman, who continued to write regularly right up to the date of his death more than twenty years later. Mr. Stedman may be said to have been my father's principal advocate in America in those early days, for it was he who wrote an introductory appreciation in the American edition of 'Vignettes in Rhyme,' published in America in 1880. The letter is headed Century Club, New York, July 19, 1875, and reads as follows :

'On returning from my voyage to the tropics I find that I have to thank you for a double pleasure : for most kind words, with respect to my verse, from one whom a down-east yankee would call "a judge of the article,"—and for a copy of "Vignettes in Rhyme," the gift of the Author's own hand. With the book I was the more pleased since it enabled me to present my own copy obtained and read months previously to a friend, who also lives in Arcady and reads your lyrics with most dainty and appreciative zest. There is such a difference between the society-verse of a rhymester and

that of a poet ! and, indeed, I have not often felt, of late, how little that difference is, until I tasted and enjoyed the sweet waters of poetry that flowed from the undercurrent of even your lightest verse. A fact cannot have too much stimulus of application—you know that Landor said there was something of summer even in the noise of insects—and I only affirm the fact that your readers here are select and *not* few, in hope that to know it may be as agreeable to you as it is to me ; and I am especially glad of it, as it speaks so well for the good taste of my own land.

‘On my return I was at once so overtaken with the galley, Preface, and proof sheets of my own forthcoming book (Victorian Poets) that I have been unable until this moment to acknowledge your note to Mr. Johnson and your gift to myself.

‘J. R. Osgood & Son of Boston, and Chatto & Windus, London, will bring out the prose volume in the autumn. And now will you not accept from the author a collected edition of verse, containing, as it chances, the stanzas which have been so fortunate as already to meet your attention ? It is a very poor exchange for your “Vignettes.” Some of the earlier pieces in the book, written in “very young youth,” are only retained because they gained a certain popularity in America, and I cannot wholly suppress them. Among the lighter and later pieces there are some which are akin to the Wall Street idyll, and which I am less ashamed to place in your hands ; such as “The Doorstep,” “Toujours Amour,” “Edged Tools,” “Peter Stuyvesant’s New Year’s Call,” “Jean Provence,” and a translation “Hypatia,” etc., and if these waifs tempt you to any exploration of the graver portion of the book, I shall be more fortunate than I deserve and much delighted.

‘I am not surprised that the grace, lightness, and pathos of your lyrics and idylls have so soon carried them to a new edition. Let me close by saying that the too brief reference made to them and their Author, in my forthcoming book, was written and in type before the reception of your note, and hence was an unprejudiced expression of my estimate. I am sure it is but the beginning of many longer plaudits which your future work gained for you at home and abroad.’

The next two letters both deal with the same subject, ‘The Prayer of the Swine to Circe’ suggested by the picture by Briton Riviere, R.A. The first is from Frederick Locker, and is dated October 3, 1875 :

‘Thanks for thinking of me and for sending me *Good Words*. I have read the “Swine” with exceeding pleasure : it was a very difficult subject, perhaps the most difficult you have attempted,

and I think it is a success. I am sure your friends will tell you this. You are extremely happy in your epithets, and the story is very well rendered. I suppose "lyric" is to be justified, but if you could introduce one or two more such words near it, it would be less of a spot than it is, but that is only a passing opinion—in stanza 5 would it improve the sense if "or" was introduced before "any"?

'I hope you are busy and writing and planning new poems. Do not be discouraged. I say this as I am always looking out for your name in the mags. and do not see it. . . . When you have time will you send me back to Chesham Street or Athenæum Club that copy of L.L.¹ with all yr emendations. I doubt if I shall be in London (to stay) much before Xmas. I hope you and yours prosper.'

The second letter, dated November 3, 1875, is from William Riviere, the Royal Academician's father :

'I have only just read your admirable "The Prayer of the Swine to Circe" in *Good Words*, and was very much struck by its beauty. I sent it to my son Briton Riviere (to whom you pay so kind a compliment). He writes to me "I am greatly pleased with the poem. I think it illustrates and explains the subject more completely than anything else that has been written about it, and contains some very fine lines in it." Please to excuse my having taken the liberty of writing to you, but knowing that the life and soul of the "twin sisters," art and literature, are nourished by appreciation, and heartfelt sympathy, I beg of you to accept my thanks as the father of Mr. Briton Riviere.'

'The Prayer of the Swine to Circe' has been the subject of frequent and generous praise, and yet it is perhaps a noteworthy fact that my father had, so far as I am aware, never read Homer in the original Greek.

One of the earliest letters from Alfred Austin is dated November 21, 1875 :

'I have to thank you for a very kind note, and likewise for the pleasure your volume of *Vers de Société* gave me, some little time ago. Pray make any use of the lines in the *Spectator* you please. I seized the opportunity—for which likewise I have to thank you—of once more intimating that the *vates sacer* writes for wise men, pretty women and himself, and does not care a couplet what the rabble of readers and critics think of him. I am sure the sentiment is yours no less than mine.

¹ Presumably the writer's *London Lyrics*.

'Anthony Trollope, to whom I remember you dedicated your book, spoke of you to me one day, so as he is a dear friend of mine, I indulge a hope that we may possibly meet under his roof.'

The next letter relates apparently to the first poem to appear in the CORNHILL in August 1876—namely, 'The Child Musician.' It is from Sir Leslie Stephen, and is dated February 22, 1876.

'I have sent your poem to the press and like it very much.

'If you will permit me to offer a criticism I would suggest that there is something rather imperfect in the last stanza. Not being a poet myself, I cannot say what, and still less can I suggest any improvement; but I fancy that you might by some trifling change of language bring out the point a little more distinctly.'

After so long an interval I am unable to say what the flaw in question was, but I may mention that my father was not very proud of 'The Child Musician,' and it was only the popularity which its constant inclusion in anthologies gained for it that forced him to reprint it from time to time in his 'Collected Poems.'

The next document I find for the year 1876 arrived apparently with no covering letter. It was a poem from Mr. (now Sir) Edmund Gosse which, with his permission, I print in full for the first time. But it must be understood that it is but a playful effort and belongs to the time when he and my father were feverishly experimenting in all the forms of exotic verse described by Théodore de Banville in his 'Petit Traité.' The date of posting was March 18, 1876.

TO AUSTIN DOBSON.

Pantoum.

April comes with birds and flowers,
Orchards waken into bloom;
April gives us sun and showers,—
Dobson gives us—a pantoum.

Orchards waken into bloom,
Stir, and quicken out of sleep;
Dobson gives us a pantoum
Where the flagging verses creep.

Stir and quicken out of sleep,
Dusty Dobson, quibbling bard!
Where the flagging verses creep,
Writing, reading, both are hard.

Dusty Dobson, quibbling bard,
 Hide in your own pot-pourri !
 Writing, reading, both are hard,
 One for you,—and one for me !

Hide in your own pot-pourri,
 Let two mandarins unscrew,
 One for you and one for me.
 I'm a dusty bard like you.

Let two mandarins unscrew,
 China beauties, fit for us !
 I'm a dusty bard like you,
 Let us both be buried thus.

China beauties, fit for us,
 Porcelain let our tomb-stone be ;
 Let us both be buried thus
 In a grave of pot-pourri.

Porcelain let our tomb-stone be ;
 Wound and muffled, head and feet,
 In that grave of pot-pourri
 You shall have your winding-sheet.

Wound and muffled, head and feet,
 You may wait the crack of doom ;
 You shall have your winding-sheet,
 Buried in your own pantoum.

The next letter, dated April 21, 1876, from J. Leicester Warren (afterwards Lord de Tabley), apparently refers to a gift of ' Vignettes in Rhyme,' third edition, which had appeared in 1875.

' Your charming gift followed your note this morning. I am going to read it leisurely before I see you, but I have just chanced now on the " Legacy," whose complete success (to my mind) shows how unnecessary my Horatian Lecture of the other night was. Also on the " Death of Procris," which convinces me that it only remains with yourself to diverge into " pastures new " poetical whenever you choose. Still you are thoroughly wise to have chosen a vein in which you are complete master and which has been so comparatively unworked out. I know of course some dozen of the pieces in your index from reviews, but I quite see even at a glance that I had no idea of the exquisite finish of your work

in extenso. I will write to or speak with you more in detail hereafter. Meantime, I send you "Rehearsals,"¹ which needs no acknowledgment till we meet. I have not got a "Soldier"² left, and I am rather glad of it, for I cannot doubt that it is long and tedious. I hope however that in my earlier attempt you may find a line or two to like. . . .

The following letter from W. B. Scott, the poet and artist, dated May 13, 1876, refers to the same volume :

'My dear Dobson,—May I use this familiar friendly form of address—to say how much I am grateful to you for your volume? Seeing Third Edition on the title page raises my envy, and immediately makes me a prejudiced critic, but in spite of that, and after only reading the first poem, "Une Marquise," and one or two shorter pieces towards the end, I must say nothing has given me so fresh a sensation, and so strong a sense of the complete realisation of the intention, as you have done. For my part I have all my life suffered under an incubus of seriousness, an old man of the sea in funeral attire, howling out a lugubrious chant about his bottle being empty, so that I look with surprise and great pleasure on the productions of men entirely free. We may talk over this matter and the point of view indicated some day, meantime many thanks for your book. . . .'

'Vignettes in Rhyme,' third edition, had also gone to America, for the following is an acknowledgment from Thomas Bailey Aldrich, the American poet, and is apparently his first letter. It is dated March 30, 1877.

'Please accept my thanks for your friendly note and your volume of gracious poems. The book followed the note at an interval of several days, which will account for my delay in acknowledging your favour. I am sensible of the value of both—the kindness of the one and the art of the other. Though you should like my verses twice as well as you say, I should consider myself still in your debt for "The Story of Rosina," "The Dead Letter," and "The Death of Procris." These seem to me the finest expression of the three *moods* which I find in the "Vignettes."

'My *recueil* of verses was printed before I learned that Mr. Locker had also translated the fifth lyric of Gautier's "Fantaisies d'Hiver." I was amused to observe how we both fought shy of Gautier's last quatrain. Mr. Locker's paraphrase is so much better than mine, that I shall suppress "A Winter Piece" when I come to make a formal collection of my poems.

¹ Published in 1873.

² *A Soldier of Fortune*, published in 1876.

'I mail with this a copy of "Flower and Thorn" which I beg you to accept with the assurance of my best wishes for your success and happiness.'

The next letter of any importance is one dated May 9, 1877, from Alexander Japp, the then editor of *Good Words* and the *Sunday Magazine*. I am not sure to what poem it refers, but I quote the following extract: 'I shall preserve the anonymous. But would not "Walter Bryce" do? If not, perhaps you will suggest some signature, when the proofs are sent.' In the short introduction which I wrote for an anthology¹ of my father's works in 1922, I referred to the fact, which was apparently quite unknown, even to Mr. Francis E. Murray, who was responsible for the admirable Austin Dobson Bibliography, published in 1900, that on certain occasions my father signed his poems 'Walter Bryce'—I could never quite understand why; and the allusion in this letter appears to indicate that Mr. Japp was the author of the name, but why he should have chosen 'Walter Bryce' is wrapt in mystery.

In 1877 the author published his second volume of poems under the title 'Proverbs in Porcelain,' and it is to this volume that the following letter, dated May 28, 1877, from Frederick Locker (to whom the volume was dedicated), would appear to refer:

'Tennyson was much pleased to receive your volume and he admits the, shall I call it *generosity* which prompted you to say that he need not acknowledge. He thinks the dedication very graceful, and quite appreciates, as I do, the honour conferred. We got out your other vol. and I made him read "Avic" aloud to us, and he spoke of your gift of metre. I am obliged to return to London to-morrow, but I thought I would tell you this. I see no notices of your book in this week's Papers. My brother tells me he has written to you.'

On May 29, 1877, Lewis Morris wrote as follows about the same book:

'Thank you very much for your book which I was very glad to get, more so than I have sometimes been in other cases. Many of your poems are old friends and all of them which I have seen I like, while in "Circe," which I think I remember seeing before, you rise to heights which when you are tired of *vers de société* I am sure you will scale with as much success as has hitherto attended your exercises on the lower slopes of Parnassus. I shall read the

¹ *An Austin Dobson Anthology—Prose and Verse*, with a foreword by Edmund Gosse. J. M. Dent & Sons, 1922.

whole of the book with great pleasure, and I am certain it will have the success which I already see it deserves. If a good word from a humble individual can do any good it shall be spoken.'

It is almost needless to mention the fact that my father was greatly attracted by the French forms, and he is usually credited with having been the first writer to have used them extensively, and certainly one of the comparatively few who did so with any measure of success. It is not therefore surprising that his poetical efforts generally should have caused some interest among his brother poets across the Channel. For this reason I do not feel that the following letter from Théodore de Banville, dated August 12, 1877, is out of place :

'MONSIEUR ET CHER POÈTE,

'Laissez-moi vous serrer la main, comme à un confrère et comme à un frère ! Que d'originalité, que de lyrisme, que de fantaisie dans vos "Proverbs in Porcelain," et comme s'unissent admirablement chez vous l'amour du beau antique et la plus vivante modernité. J'aurais dû vous adresser bien plus tôt mes remerciements et mes félicitations, mais j'ai été absent de Paris, et c'est seulement à mon retour que j'ai trouvé votre merveilleux livre. Puis il m'a fallu le secours d'un ami pour pouvoir le lire *réellement*, car hélas ! j'ai eu autrefois un peu d'anglais, mais ce peu, si insuffisant, je l'ai encore oublié. C'est là Monsieur un de mes plus grands chagrins, et je rougis de nous et de moi surtout, en ce moment où les poètes anglais adoptent si victorieusement quelques uns de nos anciens rythmes. Oui, la Ballade, Le Rondeau, Le Rondel, Le Triolet, La Villanelle vous appartiennent maintenant autant qu'à nous, et je suis très fier si j'ai pu être une des causes occasionelles de cette communion, que ni les guerres ni la politique ne sauraient détruire. Quelle belle révolution, et vivement menée. Il n'y a eu ni l'attonnements, ni hésitation, ni efforts stériles, et du premier coup vous êtes entré dans l'intimité de Charles d'Orléans, de Ronsard et de Voiture. Pour moi, c'est bien le cas de répéter le vieux proverbe :—"Les amis de nos amis sont nos amis," car en honorant mes maîtres chéris, ne m'avez vous pas donné le droit de vous aimer ? Ce droit, je compte en user toujours, en applaudissant de loin à vos efforts et à vos triomphes, et aussi en vous portant mon serrement de main le plus cordial, quand il me sera possible d'aller à Londres, que je n'ai pas vu depuis bien longtemps. En attendant un moment désiré, recevez encore, Monsieur et cher poète, mes éloges les plus sincères, et croyez que je suis avec la plus vive sympathie, votre très dévoué

THÉODORE DE BANVILLE.'

From a letter received by my father nearly forty years later from an American correspondent, it is evident that this very volume, inscribed 'Au Roi des Rimes,' found its way ultimately across the Atlantic.

The last letter which I quote for 1877 was from H. W. Longfellow, the poet, and is dated September 17, 1877:

'I have had the pleasure of receiving your friendly note and the two volumes of poems, "Proverbs in Porcelain" and "Vignettes in Rhyme," and hasten to thank you for your kind words, and for your very welcome gift.

'I find the volumes extremely entertaining and agreeable; everything drawn with a light touch "in easy rhyme, and phrases neatly fitting." Whenever I read in them, I am put into a pleasant and cheerful mood of mind.

'So I thank you very cordially. . . .'

The year 1878 opened with a characteristically long letter from Edmund Clarence Stedman, which I reproduce in full, as this contemporary poet was a critic who was far from content with a mere superficial treatment of the object of his criticism. The letter is dated January 16, 1878:

'The least one can do for a true poet, and the best thing one can do for one's self, is to buy that poet's volumes. This is a belief by which I long have guided my practice. And if ever I receive a gift copy in addition, then I bestow my "boughten" (old English, current in Yankee-land) copy upon one of the elect among my choicest friends. So you may be sure that I did not suspend my rules in anticipation of receiving from you a copy of your new edition. "Proverbs in Porcelain" passed from the bookseller's table to my own very soon after the earliest copies reached this city; and I have taken it up so often that I doubt if there is in it a bit of *sèvres*, *dresden*, *spode*, or *majolica*, with which I am not tolerably familiar. To my taste, dialogues—so new, so fragile, so lightly and firmly tinted—are exquisite. I can well understand your fear that the British mind will not at once comprehend them—especially the mind of the Philistine Briton. Yet, if they become the mode, the Philistine Briton will do his best; and be proud of his claim to comprehend them. I think that "Goodnight, Babette!" possibly from its pathos, is my favourite among these six pieces. The *Rondels* and *Rondeaux*, of course, are the matter next of interest to any modern poet and have a curious charm for my ear. (Quite a number of them, I think, have reached me through the newspapers. Our journals are wont to copy dainty things from your magazines. Only to-night I have cut your "Ballad of Prose & Rhyme" as

you see from the *N.Y. Times*.) These experiments in the old French manner greatly enrich our English thesaurus, and you manage them delightfully, no one so well. But, after all, I believe you are best when unfettered, when singing, more smoothly than any of your lyric-idyllic notes, directly from your own throat and heart. In the lines "To a Greek Girl" and "A Song of the Four Seasons" I find your essential self—the poet who so delighted me with "A Dead Letter," "An Autumn Idyll," "Tu Quoque," and others of your lyrics which I first read. The Rondels are finely adapted for preludes and endings: nothing could be better than "When Finis comes." But I am quite sure that you are either too timid or too modest in your hesitation to essay a long poem in some measure like that of "Polypheme"—which it is evident you can carry as long as you choose. If you could get hold of a purely English tale; time that of Dolly Varden patterns; scene, on the upper Thames, quality, humour and pathos blended; atmosphere, *your own*; you would make of it something very fine. Not too many foreign words. Tune it to the English ear, and please that ear with a finesse made perfect by your french studies—without that ear's suspecting it. After all, this is a very vague suggestion. Speaking of the "Autumn Idyll"; you will be amused by this indubitable parody, or plagiarism, of Harte's—whose originality is confined to his prose. In verse he is a freebooter, only caring to get his magazine-pay, and ready to lay hands upon the Ark, if need be. He has a wonderful knack, though, of catching the point of a thing, and I do wish he would settle down and do his best work. Do you care to read a bit of an attempt at billowy blank-verse? 'Tis my share of the Whittier tribute, on the old prophet's seventieth birthday. He is a mixture of Burns and Elijah, if you can conceive of such a personage. Your friend Mr. Japp has done me a good turn in the *Nonconformist*, for which I am grateful, as I hope, ere long, to offer an English edition of *selected* poems to my *transatlantic friends*.'

Another letter, from Sir Leslie Stephen, dated February 9, 1878, runs:

'A love of curés or of the genus to which they belong is not (I must confess) my ruling passion; but I like your curé and hope that he will soon make his bow to the readers of the CORNHILL. Touch him up, if you please, when he is in type: I have nothing more to say than that I am glad to hear from you again.'

'The Curé's Progress'—the poem referred to—appealed to many people, more especially perhaps to members of the Roman Catholic Church, and it was pleasant to see the appreciations which appeared

in Catholic papers at the time of the poet's death. There is one before me that reads :

'The death of Austin Dobson robs the country of a sincere, graceful, almost fastidious poet. Mr. Dobson knew his limitations, and never claimed any powers as a great poet. He contented himself with a delicate, gentle vein that was the delight of a quiet hour snatched from the humdrum of office work. As the antithesis of the grotesque and unorthodox that masquerades as art, Mr. Dobson gave us refreshment, and we hasten to pay our tribute to one who, though not a Catholic, was admired by Catholics; who had a gift for song and used it well.'

My father's correspondence with the late W. E. Henley was very voluminous and engaging, and I shall have opportunity later to afford further examples of it. In the meantime I quote the following letter—apparently the first—as it touches upon the attempt of various writers of the time, of whom perhaps my father was the most enthusiastic, to adopt the various French forms of versification. The letter is dated February 28, 1878, and reads :

'Mr. Lang has sent me your letter. You will, I am sure, excuse me if I take advantage of the sort of opening it gives me of replying to it personally. I have known and admired your work so long that I feel as tho' I had a real acquaintance with you.

'I am sorry that I should have been so perverse as to have done a Ballade à double refrain before you. Unfortunately, however, in an evil hour I listened to Clement Marot, and rushed upon my fate. I really do regret it very much, because (as I have often had occasion to write before) I think very highly of the "Ballade of Prose & Rhyme." I can only console myself for my indiscretion by looking upon your Ballade as the dawn, and mine as that darkest hour which is supposed to precede it.

'Let me thank you (as Acting Editor) for your very kindly notice of the verse that has appeared in *London*.'

On April 16, 1878, Arthur O'Shaughnessy writes from the British Museum :

'I thank you most sincerely for having so cordially responded to my wish, which my friend Gosse has kindly communicated to you. I had long hoped to exchange books with you and mentioned it to several of your friends, but had not the good fortune to see you myself; I now send "Music and Moonlight," and I shall delight to think that you will live for a little while in my dream world, as I shall in your own.'

(To be continued.)

ST. STEPHEN'S DAY IN BUDAPEST (Aug. 20).

BY ELSA DE SZÁSZ.

FIVE o'clock in the morning, and the rain splashing on the window-sill. Oh, bad luck! To be in Budapest on St. Stephen's Day, that most colourful, most picturesque of national festivals, and to have it drowned in rain!

A woman's voice—it must have been that of the concierge next door speaking to the man who sweeps the side walk—came floating up from the street below:

'God does not love the Hungarians, that's clear.'

Does He not? thought I. Then one might as well go to sleep again. Or—was the rain slackening, by any chance?

By six o'clock it had stopped altogether, and there were breaks here and there in the uniform grey of the sky. The church bells—dozens of them, it seemed—were clanging excitingly. Suppose one ventured out, after all, and saw what there was to be seen?

It was at eight that the sacred relic, St. Stephen's right hand, was to be brought forth from the Royal Chapel and carried in solemn procession through the streets, to the Coronation Church and back again. So I was in plenty of time.

But was I?

An eminent Hungarian politician once expressed, in a moment of petulance, his firm conviction that the Magyars had left Asia and occupied their present place of abode solely because the sun rose two or three hours later there, thus enabling them to do the same. But either he maligned his countrymen strangely, or their Oriental love of a show exceeds their Oriental love of ease; for on this 20th of August 1926 half the nation seemed to have risen before the sun, as I ruefully discovered on reaching the first stage of my pilgrimage, the Chain Bridge that was to take me over the Buda.

Usually I love to linger over this crossing; to gaze, now at the curving, horse-chestnut-fringed sweep of the embankment, now at the climbing loveliness behind—finely drawn, all of it, as a sea-shell and as delicately tinted, from the verdigris cupolas of the Royal Castle to the rose-red roof of the Coronation Church and its white, arrow-slender spire.

But to-day I was caught and swept along by a current as strong

as the river itself ; a current that was less an impact of bodies than a quivering, forward urge of the spirit—the eagerness of thousands of minds towards a wonderful experience just ahead. For it was borne in upon me, as soon as I became one with this strangely multifarious crowd, that that which animated it was not mere love of a show but something much deeper ; something that was religion and patriotism and hero-worship rolled into one : a genuine, strangely touching enthusiasm for the king whose right hand, miraculously preserved, was to be shown to it once again.

St. Stephen of the Hungarians is not the young and gentle martyr who was stoned at Jerusalem, but the great ruler who gave Magyars Christianity and received in return a king's crown from Pope Sylvester II. This was in the year 1000. In 1038 King Stephen died, after a long and well-spent life ; and forty years later his right hand was found to have escaped dissolution. Thereupon he was canonised, naturally. And ever since he has remained a living force to all his people : to the simple a benignant father who sends rain and sunshine as they are needed, to the enlightened, even the most sophisticated among them, a soul-uplifting reminder of what their race can rise to at its best.

For this nation, so tragically ill-fated in many respects, is happy at least in this, that with an infinite capacity for passionate loyalty and little chance of exercising it on the Habsburgs, it has found in its own past a sovereign wholly worthy of the burning devotion of his subjects.

The bridge passed, I was carried on up the hill to what is still called the ' fort,' though it has long ceased to be one, where, between the Castle and the Coronation Church, small but stately eighteenth-century palaces stand and dream away the months and the years in a gold-powdered *Belle-au-Bois-Dormant* atmosphere. One could imagine them opening surprised eyes at the seething crowd below and murmuring : ' What's this ? Ah yes, St. Stephen's Day ! We've had it before, I think . . . ? '—then sinking back once more into their picturesque slumber.

The crowd meanwhile, silent, vibrant, tense, was waiting. Twenty minutes to eight . . . Ten minutes . . . five. . . . Then not even that much. . . .

Eight o'clock ! They must be coming now.

And they came.

First, in a sudden burst of pale but unmistakable sunshine, a troop of mounted police—milk-white steeds, blood-red shabracks,

brown, honest faces. . . . Then the khaki of boy scouts. Then girls in dainty white—a whole pigeon flock of them; and ladies in the pretty gala dress of the nation: brocaded skirt, filmy white apron, pointed, pearl-laced bodice and velvet tiara tied with a big bow behind.

Then groups of villagers; young men and maidens in the distinctive costumes of their districts, each group different, yet all brilliant as nosegays of old-fashioned cottage flowers; almost one expected them to bring with them a perfume of heliotrope and mignonette.

Next came regimental corps, with their bands which played, stirringly, old ecclesiastical canticles; and corporations of every kind. . . .

And waving over all, flags, flags, flags—loveliest and gayest of all the symbols that men, in their passionate search for something to die for, have wrought unto themselves. Flags of silk and cloth-of-gold, tattered regimental flags and square, straight-hanging church banners, with embroidered images of the Virgin, *patrona Hungariae*. And the age-old flags of the various towns; and those of the guilds, with the homely emblems of each.

And then, at last, preceded and surrounded by soldiers of the bodyguard in red-lined white cloaks and silver-braided green tunics, the Relic, gem-studded, dazzling, in its red and gold casket carried on the shoulders of Franciscan monks, on whom this honour has devolved because it is their jubilee year.

Following close came the Cardinal Prince Primate, pleasantly robust in his sumptuous scarlet and ermine, and the elegant, ascetic figure of the Papal Nuncio in sweeping folds of purple silk. Priests in white vestments acted as train-bearers to both. And a cloud of lace-surpliced, gold-chasubled church dignitaries hung round them, from which there emerged with a startling trenchancy the virile figure of the Regent. His flashing eyes and keen nut-cracker face, which ought to be ugly and is so unexpectedly the reverse, made the faces of the two Archdukes, father and son, who came after, look almost blurred in their blond benignity, so that the eye slid from them to the magnificent colour effects made by the members of the Government and other notabilities in the jewel-studded velvets and aigretted fur caps of the Hungarian national dress. Long files of monks and nuns followed, their brown and grey and black and white forming a piquant contrast to the splendour that went before. And the rear was brought up by another troop of mounted

police, who might have been an anticlimax, had their shabracks not been so beautiful a red.

When the heart of the procession reached Trinity Place the music of the bands stopped, and the mighty sounds of the organ came pouring forth through the open portals of the Cathedral, as though to meet the Exalted Visitor and waft It in on their wings. And all the great folk filed in, as well as many who were not so great. And there was High Mass celebrated by the Primate, with some very beautiful singing.

But for the many thousands who had had to remain outside, an altar had been raised at the foot of St. Stephen's equestrian statue, where the Gothic ramparts and turrets of the Fisherman's Bastion frame a shining view of the river below. And there the Bishop of Buda held Field Mass.

It was rather a wonderful sight—the little old-world square on the top of the hill, to which the veiled and milky sky lent something of a church's dimness, and the reverent crowd, composed of every class and shade of the people—artisans and aristocrats, bank clerks and fine ladies, peasants and politicians—yet so welded by a great and traditional feeling that no dividing line was visible. It was a nation that stood there, lifted high as a monstrosity above itself and the pettiness of daily life.

It seemed impossible for anyone to escape the spell of that joyously solemn moment. Yet after a while I became aware, with something of a shock, of someone who apparently had done so.

It was a girl, no longer young, and dressed simply, almost shabbily, in black, who stood not far from me. Her face was turned away from the square, towards the distant bend of the river. And large tears, which she furtively dried with a little rolled-up handkerchief, kept welling up in her eyes and brimming over.

Was she weeping for someone recently dead? Was she grieving for her youth or a vanished happiness? Or was she, perhaps, a native of some territory lost to Hungary through the war, suffering the awful loneliness of the cut-off limb through which there no longer flows the warm blood of the living body?

I shall never know.

*A NAT'S DAUGHTER.**A TALE OF BURMESE LIFE.*

BY LT.-COMMANDER A. S. ELWELL-SUTTON, R.N.

It was evening, and very hot, especially in the stuffy, crowded bazaar, with its huddled booths lighted up by rows of coloured paper lanterns displaying their variegated goods—rice, fish, fruits, vegetables, coloured silks, stuffs, toys, utensils, carved woods, and jewellery. The rustling of the passers-by, with the continuous murmur of their conversation, chaffering, disputing, jesting, formed a rumbling background of sound whereon arose the shrill cries of the vendors inviting attention to their wares. They were nearly all women, these vendors, old and young; but many of the latter, leaving the business of the moment to their elders, were withdrawn to a corner of the booth and calmly employed about their evening toilet, glancing occasionally to where, near at hand, their prospective swains were lounging about and casting sheep's eyes in return, whilst awaiting the appropriate moment to approach more nearly and indulge in tender conversation under the watchful eye of parent or guardian.

At one of the booths, displaying a brightly and variously coloured assortment of native hand-woven silks and cottons, its younger occupant was thus busily employed before her mirror, letting down and binding up her dark smooth hair, adorning it with fragrant flowers and some rather tawdry jewels, carefully rubbing her cheeks with a sandalwood-scented cosmetic, and polishing her extremely white teeth with a stick of charcoal. A close observer, even in the rather dim light given by a small lantern hung above her head, would have remarked that the hair was something finer and the complexion fairer than that of her companions similarly occupied in the other booths; but however keen his eyes, he would have looked in vain for the sheepish swain for whom presumably these preparations were being made. If, moreover, he had moved a little closer to a neighbouring stall where two pretty sisters were seated side by side busily engaged like the rest, he might have overheard the following conversation.

'The devil's daughter must still be wasting her time,' one, the elder, was saying. 'For whom is she waiting? Does she not know that none will ever approach her honourably?'

'You forget, sister,' replied the other, 'there is always Maung Gauk. . . .'

'Who is born of Man Nat, the chief of the devils, I think,' retorted the first, 'with his crooked back and ugly face. Truly they would make a pair—beauty and the beast—but she scorns him, and I don't blame her for that, though indeed she might as well take what she can get. Doubtless that is what *he* thinks too!'

'You speak harshly, sister,' said the younger girl with a sigh, 'yet there are those who speak well of Maung Gauk, and say that he acquires much merit in quiet ways, having a kind heart behind his ugly exterior, loving the law of the Victorious One and walking in his way, even as the blessed Ananda did.'

'They will say anything,' grumbled the first; 'but get on with thy polishing, Ma Yit, and do not keep thy lover waiting lest he go seek elsewhere.'

Ma Yit obeyed this sisterly injunction, and before long was duly engaged in a respectful and rather distant conversation with a good-looking Burmese youth, who presently summoned up courage enough to ask permission to repeat some verses he had written in her praise.

As the amorous lines are scarcely worth our attention, however, we will return to the person amiably described as the 'devil's daughter,' who had finished her toilet and was squatting rather disconsolately by her mirror, watching a very old and decrepit woman, whom she occasionally addressed as Mama Bwa or Madam Grandmother, engaged rather grumblingly about the business of the stall.

'He is there,' said this latter at last in a surly voice, pointing to a shadowed corner a little way down the same side of the street. 'I think thou hadst better give him a kind word, Ma Cho, for of a truth if thy Karma will send thee nothing better than a crooked husband remember that its consequences must be worked out in one way or another, if not in this then in that, and 'twere merit to acquire even a crooked husband, whereas . . .' she stopped expressively; 'thou art pretty, daughter,' she added thoughtfully, 'prettier even than thy mother, who won the heart of the Nat, and brought the curse upon us all.'

'You are always talking of the curse, grandmother, yet it is a

word of little meaning to me. They call me the devil's daughter, but why they do I know not, neither do they know that speak it. I think it is an idle tale, for indeed I am just as the other girls, only fairer, as they say our princesses were in the old days, and prettier, like them too. Who knows but that I am a princess, born in a lowly place, but with the outward form of a queen—like those who graced the throne of Mindon Min. . . .'

'Doubtless thou wilt know all that at the Great Deliverance,' interrupted the old woman with a shrug of her shoulders; 'meanwhile it is thy business to seek the way to it by remembering the precepts of the Holy One, and storing up as much merit as we women are capable of acquiring in this existence, for that is how curses are got rid of. It matters little why they come.'

'Yet in *this* existence,' rejoined Ma Cho slowly, 'it is at least given to us to know what there is to be known about it, and you, O Grandmother, must know more than you ever have told me. Will you not tell me why I am called the devil's daughter? See, is it not my birthday to-morrow?'

The old woman nodded. 'Even so,' she muttered; 'thou hast full sixteen years, and the day falls on the very same weekday—Friday, the day of Thankkya, the Morning Star. It will rise with the sun to-morrow,' she went on, still muttering to herself, 'even as it did on that day, a sad one for thee and me.'

Ma Cho watched her grandmother closely whilst this soliloquy was going on, but was unable to catch a word of its meaning, and she was about to reiterate her request when a shuffling step sounded close at hand, and, recognising it, she looked round hastily. It was Maung Gauk, her crooked lover, the only one that had ever approached her, for pretty as she was, she was shunned by the rest because of the mystery about her.

The querulous elder sister in the neighbouring stall had not exaggerated her description of the unfortunate Maung Gauk's appearance. His nose was flat and twisted, the mouth awry with a hare lip; there was a slight cast in one eye and an ugly livid birthmark on one cheek, whilst his spine was curved sufficiently to more than justify his sobriquet of 'crooked.' Yet, withal, a sympathetic observer would have seen that the undoubted distortion of his more prominent features served rather to disguise than mirror the living soul within. For the forehead above the misshapen nose was good, and the chin beneath the ugly mouth finely moulded, whilst in the depths of the unsightly eyes there lurked

kindly humorous lights, tempered by a certain gentle sadness that bespoke the tragedy of his present existence.

He came forward, and leaning his back against one of the supporting pillars of the booth, looked up at Ma Cho where she sat some three or four feet away, contemplating her mirror now and occupying herself in putting a few unnecessary touches to her adornments.

'You know I am here, Ma Cho,' said Maung Gauk at last, 'and my looks will not hurt you, for you have seen them before and are still as beautiful as ever, quite beautiful enough for both of us, whilst you have proof that my devotion will stand a hard trial.'

Ma Cho took no notice for a few seconds, but soon, as though drawn by the gaze of Maung Gauk's one straight eye, she turned her head a little to look at him, saying in a low and rather sweet tone: 'Truly, brother, you have shown constancy, and I will not chide you now. Nay, I am sorry for you, and can feel for you, who are more forlorn even than I, since there is anyhow one who makes love to me, even though I cannot love him.'

'What will you do, then, Ma Cho?' said Maung Gauk. 'You know that men shun you because they say you are a Nat's daughter, and will bring bad luck. Yet here am I ready to share the burden of it with you because I love you, but you will have none of me.'

'That is a true word that last,' replied the girl, still in a gentle and rather sorrowful tone; 'therefore Maung Gauk will be better employed seeking another love. . . .' She broke off quickly as the unfortunate Maung Gauk bowed his head and drew back a little, for she knew, and indeed Maung Gauk in his half-humorous way had made no secret of the fact, that there was not another girl in the village who would so much as look at him.

'Ponder it well, Ma Cho,' he said after a pause lasting over a minute, 'for I think there is a turning-point coming for both of us. Last night as I slept my spirit wandered into the jungle, and there of a sudden I came upon the tiger, Shwe Thet, who has been troubling us of late, and he leapt upon me and would have seized me, but that there sprang up between us a bush covered with Thabyé, the flowers of victory that make love last for ever, and I awoke, and the scent of them was still in my nostrils, as it is now,' he concluded, leaning forward.

Ma Cho shook her head. 'That is not surprising,' she said, pointing to his bosom, whence in fact a spray of white flowers protruded; 'but I will not take it, in spite of the dream. Is that all?'

'No,' replied Maung Gauk, speaking gravely, 'I recognised the place of my dream, for it is a spot well known to me, and behold to-day there have come two Thakin¹ to slay Shwe Thet, and they inquired for me who am the best tracker. . . .'

A curious choking sound as of a half-suppressed cry coming from the shadows within the booth made him break off and look round to see the figure of Mama Bwa coming forward with a scared look upon her wrinkled features. 'Of what do you speak?' she said in an agitated tone. 'Who bid them come, and wherefore? Shwe Thet has taken no man's life—not yet—not yet,'—her tone became almost menacing—'a cow or two, perhaps, or a goat. We can spare that, aye, better than what must be lost if fools displease the Nats. Nay, boy, you are a good lad. Thou wilt see to it that the Thakin do not find what they seek. 'Twill be easy. I know them, as who should not,' she muttered, then added aloud: 'They are eager and impatient, especially when they are young, and will soon tire of the fruitless chase. They are young?' she queried.

'One is young and handsome as the white men go,' replied Maung Gauk, 'but the other is old and grizzled. He has lived long in the land, but has not been here for many years. I do not know how many.'

'Thou didst speak of a dream,' said the old woman; 'tell it me, that I may read what it says. . . . Aye,' she went on, when Maung Gauk had complied, 'it is clear. The Nat gives warning, but for the spray of flowers—that has another meaning'—she glanced at her granddaughter—'that may not be told yet. Now you have gazed enough. Farewell, and may the Blessed Ones show you enlightenment.'

At about the same hour the two 'Thakin' or Sahibs of Maung Gauk's acquaintance were reclining in the veranda of the rest-house, enjoying the comparative cool of the evening as best they could with the aid of pipes and flat and rather tepid drinks.

'It's funny how hard it is to get any information about the beast,' the younger, whose name was Ronald Carstairs, was saying. 'It's rather like trying to get hold of some popular malefactor in Ireland or Sicily, for example, where all the inhabitants band together to conceal him. Even that ugly fellow we saw last, who was supposed to be the goods, couldn't or wouldn't say much to the purpose. I suppose they've got some superstition or other about the animal.'

¹ Sahibs.

'Very likely,' replied his companion, taking his pipe from his mouth and tapping out the ashes preparatory to refilling it. He was, as Maung Gauk had described him, a grizzled-looking veteran, though like most men who have been out 'East' probably younger than his looks. 'I told you there was a queer story to tell of what happened when I was here before.'

'So you did, Weston ; let's have it now.'

The other proceeded to fill and light his pipe, and puffed away silently for a few minutes, whilst his companion settled back in his chair and waited with that resigned patience engendered even amongst fretful white men by the moist, lazy climate. The air was very still, and the only sounds were occasional rustlings from the trees outside, and a harsh croak or cry from some bird or beast in the thick jungle that lay beyond the clearing and narrow strips of cultivated ground in front of the rest-house. Overhead a few clouds had darkened the sky and there was a smell of rain in the air.

At last Weston took his pipe from his mouth and began.

'I was up here about, let me see, why, of course—just sixteen years ago. There was another fellow in the place, about your age he was then, doing some kind of prospecting work for Government under me. Never mind his name—we'll call him George, which it wasn't, for short. He'd asked me to come up ostensibly for the same reason that we've come up. There was a tiger in the place, and a bad one. He'd injured a man and killed a child, which they don't usually do in these parts, being content as a rule with cows and goats. But that wasn't by any means the whole tale. This was a quite exceptional tiger.

'It appears that George had got into trouble with the wife of one of the villagers, and I needn't say I was sorry to hear it. I'm no prig, and though I think it's a mistake, I'm not going to say that a fellow who takes up with a girl of her own free will when he's landed in some benighted place like this is a villain, but he certainly ought to let the married ones alone. This one—let me see—what was her name ? There's no harm in telling you that—I've got it : Ma Pyu, as we might say, Blanche. Well, she was an exceptionally pretty girl for a Burmese, and, as you know, some of them are quite pretty. I'm not saying all the blame was on him, indeed I'm not going to blame anybody. She got infatuated with him as women will, and he with her, though he was a steady-going chap enough as a rule—perhaps that was why he fell so easily. Now it so happened that just about the time when the irrevocable thing had been done,

this tiger began to appear about the place, and the woman seized the opportunity to spread a story about that he was really the embodiment of one of their local Nats or spirits, Sakaru by name, who had fallen in love with her and commanded her to withdraw from her husband for a year. It's the sort of story that's believed readily enough here, and even makes people rather afraid of the woman. She's supposed to acquire powers of prophecy and looking into other people's secrets, in exchange for being able to keep her own, I suppose.

'Well, things had been going on on this basis for some months when two things happened. The woman found she was going to have a baby, and the tiger, which had done very little harm up to date, became aggressive. George by this time was getting over his passion, and his conscience was beginning to trouble him. Also, as was inevitable, there were rumours getting about that approached the truth, and the possibility of a baby had upset him. He didn't know anything about the peculiar alleged relationship of the tiger to his inamorata, and had long been wanting to settle its business, but had always been dissuaded by Ma Pyu, who had put forward some superstitious objections. However, things were going a bit too far, and he got down his gun and bought a goat as a bait, and tried to get the beast. But with no luck. Instead, the beast killed a child, as I told you, and then George sent for me to give him a hand. I think Ma Pyu's superstitions had affected him, and he'd come to the conclusion that the beast was immune so far as he was concerned. Well, to cut the story short, I got it, as I hope we shall get this one—a clean kill—it was early one morning—it will be sixteen years ago to a day to-morrow, and curiously enough almost at the moment when my bullet entered the brute's skull, Ma Pyu gave birth to a little girl. The poor mother died a few hours afterwards, but the coincidence was a bit of luck for her good name, for the story of course went that she had to go and join her demon husband. The baby? Oh! it lived, I believe, but I never heard any more about it. The woman's parents would have looked after it, and if, as is probable, it was a different colour from its compatriots, the Nat would account for that.' He yawned and finished his drink. 'Come, it's time for bed. We ought to get to work to-morrow, and may have some hard tramping and long nights before we've finished.' And with that he got up, still yawning, and went off, the other following him thoughtfully.

Next morning Ma Cho was seated with her spinning-wheel on

the veranda of her grandmother's house. It was raised up some four or five feet above the ground, and ran round three sides of the two dwelling-rooms which were raised up higher still, the space underneath being used as a store. In one of the rooms Mama Bwa was moving about, grumbling to herself and occasionally calling out some admonition to Ma Cho whenever the hum of the spinning-wheel ceased, as it did at rather frequent intervals.

A time came at last when admonition had no effect. Ma Cho squatted with folded arms before the idle wheel, and when the old woman came out angrily, the girl looking up at her said quietly: 'I thought your brother, U Gunama the Yahan, was to speak to me to-day—on my birthday, my sixteenth birthday—the day of fate for me, as you have always said.'

'He comes,' grumbled the old woman, 'but that is no reason why you should sit idle awaiting him. . . .'

'You are right, Mama,' replied Ma Cho coolly; 'he comes,' and she pointed down the path below.

The Yahan was an old shrivelled man, older even than his sister, and he came along but slowly, holding his begging bowl in one hand and helping himself with a staff carried in the other. His head with its shaven crown, shrunken skin and hollow cheeks looked more like a skull than one belonging to a living man, and the effect was enhanced by the fact that he still possessed a fine set of teeth, showing up prominently between fleshless lips.

'Greeting, O sister, and to thee, O daughter, in the name of the Blessed One,' he said gravely, whilst he handed his bowl to Ma Cho, who went off to fill it. 'Is it done? Is she betrothed?' he went on, addressing Mama Bwa.

The old woman shook her head.

'I am sorry,' said U Gunama slowly; 'Maung Gauk is a worthy youth and should achieve merit enough to wipe out the curse on him now and bring him a higher station in the next life, but the girl—does she not understand that there can be no better fate for her—though perhaps a worse one?' he added the last words slowly, shaking his head the while.

'A worse one?' said Mama Bwa.

'She comes. Bid her sit and listen.'

Just as Ma Cho had squatted down there arose the sound of voices talking in an unfamiliar tongue, and footsteps heavier than those made by the barefooted Burmans. The little group on the veranda remained silent, all three looking out curiously to see the

strangers, who were none other than the two Thakin, Carstairs walking in front and looking particularly handsome beneath his white tope, with his shot-gun over his shoulder, his shirt open at the neck and the sleeves rolled up. Ma Cho followed him with her eyes, and when he looked round and caught her gaze a queer, giddy feeling came over her, and her heart beat more quickly against her ribs. She did not see that the old Yahan was watching her and noting all, even the movement of her lips as she murmured to herself, 'What a handsome man!'

Curiously enough, almost at the same moment, Carstairs remarked to Weston, 'What a pretty girl!' and his words were overheard by one Maung Sawka, or 'Impudence'—well named, if all accounts of his activities were true, and who was acting as the white men's guide that morning, in the absence of Maung Gauk, ostensibly, anyhow, seeking signs in the jungle.

'My daughter,' said the Yahan kindly, when they had settled themselves after this passing distraction, 'thou knowest that this is a day of fate for thee. Sixteen years ago to-day the wheel of thy life fulfilled another circle, and thy soul came back to this valley of tribulation, but hardly, hardly . . . and men called thee the Nat's daughter. So it is, for thy mother was beautiful, as thou art, and the mighty Nat Sakaru loved her.' He pronounced the last words very distinctly, and Ma Cho trembled, and did so yet more when he went on: 'Some say he took the form of a tiger, and others . . .' He stopped abruptly, then changing his tone: 'Thy mother's soul went indeed to the land of the Nats in the hour that thou sawest the light, and thy grandmother here laid the gossamer web on thy heart lest thine should follow it . . . also,' he added slowly, 'the tiger was slain then. But there were some who thought,' he leaned forward, looking at the girl earnestly, 'that the Nat thy father was not in the tiger, but that he took on a body like to one of the Thakin such as passed just now.'

Ma Cho's hands went suddenly to her side, as if struck by a sharp pain, but with an effort she recovered herself, and the old man went on as though he had noticed nothing, but speaking with more energy: 'Now, my daughter, the law of Karma must be fulfilled, but there is a choice for thee. Thou art of full age, yet there is no well-shaped youth who has asked for thee, for so it is ordained for this thy present life. Nevertheless, Maung Gauk is a good man and loves thee. Canst thou not love him, for so may the law be satisfied and merit gained? If not . . .' he shaded his

eyes with his hands, his body stiffened as though he were going into the first stages of a trance, and he remained thus for a space of nearly ten minutes. Then, his body relaxing, he went straight on with his uncompleted sentence: 'the law will still be satisfied now and will require heavier satisfaction in the future for the merit lost. Thou canst choose.'

Ma Cho put her hands before her face and pressed them hard over her eyes, and with the shutting out of real objects she saw only the handsome figure of the Thakin, and the bizarre thought came that it was indeed into the body of such an one that the spirit of the Nat her father had entered, and a queer feeling of sympathy for her dead mother went over her. She must have been pretty, that mother, if the Nat had found it necessary to take on such a handsome form, and surely she would not wish her pretty daughter to be given to ugly Maung Gauk and become the laughing-stock of the other girls like Ma Yit, for example, whose lover was handsome enough to be spoken about enviously.

'But I do not love him, O Paya of Great Glory,' she said tearfully. 'What merit will there be in such a union?'

'The Blessed One has bidden us love all things,' replied the old man sententiously. 'Maung Gauk loves thee. Let him then be thy school for love. If not . . .' He raised his hands, then let them fall again, whilst his face resumed its former impassivity.

'Aye,' interposed Mama Bwa, who, up to this point, had been restraining her impatience with difficulty, 'let her love Maung Gauk, and whisper in his ear that he go not to the place of his dream to find Shwe Thet; for I tell thee, girl, it is the spirit of thy father who dwells again in the tiger—yes, the tiger—the other story is a foolish tale. Take the spray of Thabyé flowers from Maung Gauk to-night, Ma Cho, so will the curse pass from us, and all will be well for him and for thee, for thy father Sakaru who is Shwe Thet, aye, and for the Thakin too, who will do foolishly to anger the Nat.'

But Ma Cho put her head into her hands and made no answer.

A few hours later the two Thakin were digesting their lunch on the veranda of the rest-house. Maung Gauk had still not returned, but Maung Sawka was squatting in a corner of the small court at the back, partaking of a meal of rice sparsely mingled with scraps of dried fish.

There seemed to be some difference of opinion between the two

men, for the faces of both were very glum. Weston, who had the least to say, puffed hard at times at his pipe, which he held very firmly between his teeth, but the other had let his fall to the ground.

'There's no harm in it,' he was saying. 'Everybody does it, and the girls don't mind. They are rather flattered. Look here, I've been three years in this country already and am likely to be another three before I get leave. I'm alone in that god-forsaken place most of the time. She needn't come if she doesn't want to, but if she does she shall queen it there. There's no harm in it—or if you like,' he went on, frowning a little, 'call it a choice of evils, for I tell you I've fallen in love with the pretty little thing, and if I'm left alone in that place after this is over I shall go mad. I've kept straight so far, but there it is. Now then, which is the greater evil?'

'For you?' said Weston laconically, taking his pipe for an instant from between his teeth.

'Yes, for me!' retorted Ronald.

'It's hard to say. These people think that all these things have got to be paid for, and they may be right.'

'But if the girl is willing?'

'And after three years?'

Ronald was silent.

'And there might be children.'

'Look here,' exclaimed the younger man, 'it's happened before and can happen again, and if she desires it at the end of three years, I'll marry her. Why not? I reckon I'm booked for this country most of my life, and better men than I have done the same and been happy enough. . . . I shall tell her that.'

'Meaning it?' said the other quizzically; 'though I don't know that it'll weigh much with her. She'll probably be glad to get back to her own people after three years, but . . .' he stopped expressively.

Ronald made no answer, but picked up his neglected pipe, relighted it, and puffed away defiantly.

'I shouldn't do it, old man,' said Weston at last. 'I know there doesn't seem much harm in it, but I think we're wrong in supposing these people don't mind, for somehow it always leads to trouble; besides, we are different. Pride of blood, you know. There's a real danger of being dragged down to a lower level.'

'Oh! don't talk like a Government circular!' cried the other

impatiently. 'Try and understand this, if you can : I'm in love, and love brooks no obstacles.'

Weston retorted something about a magazine story, but the younger man had already got up and was walking away to the back of the rest-house, where Maung Sawka was finishing his meal. His late companion lay back, smoking furiously.

'I suppose it doesn't matter,' he said, 'not much, and less than it mattered . . .' he broke off with a shrug.

Evening again, but cooler than the previous one, for a light breeze from the northern hills was stirring the bamboos and creepers, and wafting the scents of the sacred flowers of the Amherstia across the open space in front of the rest-house, whilst overhead a few patches of cloud drifted lazily across the starry sky. Down in the bazaar the scene was as busy as usual ; the girls sat at their toilets or listened to the conventional compliments of their admirers, but in Mama Bwa's booth there was nobody save the old lady, a fact duly remarked upon by Ma Yit and her caustic elder sister.

'Perchance Ma Cho is ill,' remarked the former.

'Aye, doubtless,' said the other sarcastically, 'thou knowest that two Thakin have come to slay Shwe Thet, but thou dost not know that just after dusk, as I passed, I saw Maung Sawka speaking to Ma Cho.' She laughed spitefully. 'See, sister, there will be a tale to tell Maung Gauk when he returns to-morrow.'

'What can it matter to him,' said Ma Yit with a sigh, 'since she loves him not ?'

'It will matter to her, and perhaps to others, for thou dost forget that Maung Gauk loves her.'

At about the same time that this conversation was taking place Ronald Carstairs was pacing feverishly up and down his room at the rest-house. Its wide windows, thrown open but shaded by gauze curtains to keep out the mosquitoes, looked across a small veranda upon a fenced-in plantation that left only a narrow space for passers-by. But there was nobody about, for indeed the place lying on the outskirts of the village the opposite side from the bazaar was usually deserted at that hour.

Presently, however, light footsteps were heard, and Carstairs stopped and then went slowly to the window, parting the curtains and putting his head out between them. The light from the lamp behind threw a faint beam on to the pathway, and his figure showed sharply silhouetted against it. He stood thus listening and

watching for perhaps half a minute, then two dark figures appeared, coming slowly from the direction of the village. As they reached the illuminated portion of the path they stopped, and one of them, who appeared to be a man, slipped back into the shadows, leaving the other alone.

It was Ma Cho.

Carstairs, still motionless, stood framed against the glow sent out by the lamp and gazed at the girl, and the girl stood and gazed at him, with all the poor soul of her concentrated in her eyes, as she tried with the help of those murky outlines to reshape the haunting vision of the morning.

At last Carstairs stepped out through the window and leant over the veranda railing, so that his face came within a couple of feet of hers, and the scent of the white jasmine flowers in her dark hair reached his nostrils; but since it was in the shadow she could not see the features distinctly.

'So,' he said, speaking haltingly but distinctly in the Burmese tongue, 'you have come, Ma Cho?'

She laid her free hand on her breast and looked at him, always with that awe and wonder in her eyes that told him indeed more than any words could tell, and maddened him too, so that any last promptings of prudence that might have remained were cast aside.

But he spoke again: 'Tell me, Ma Cho, why have you come?' and bent his head down a little more.

'O Thakin,' she said at last in her soft voice, 'I have only seen your face once, but it was a face that had a wonder and a mystery, speaking of some old knowledge that we two must have had for one another long ages ago, before we came back to this troubled earth again; but I cannot tell, I cannot tell. Let me see your face, and when I have looked upon it I will try and give you my answer.'

He grasped the purport of her words, if not their full sense, and leaning over still more held out both his arms. She hesitated a moment, then raised hers, stretching up on tip-toe, and leaning forward until his hands came under her shoulder-blades. In another instant he had swung her up with one mighty heave clear of the railings, and taking her by the hand led her in through the curtained window to the small table whereon stood the lamp. Then he seated himself on the chair by it, so that the lamp-rays fell on his face, and she squatted before him, gazing in rapture.

'Well, Ma Cho,' he said, 'will you tell me now?'

'O Thakin,' she answered in an awe-struck voice, 'it is as I thought. I have seen you before, perhaps in the spirit world, or in some higher realm, though I do not think I could have descended in the scale of life after having met you. The Blessed Master, who conquered the Evil One, and showed us the Way to Salvation, said that love was the crown of all things, and that where there was love there could be no sin. Therefore if we loved before, we surely acquired merit, and if we love now it will be a preparation for a higher state. Therefore I tell you, O Thakin, that I am come because I love you, as I believe I met and loved you in a past life. And now, O Thakin, will you confirm that belief, so that I may know it is truly he whom I found then, that I have found again?'

For the first time since the beginning of the interview a real qualm struck through Carstairs' breast, bringing back some of Weston's words, and awaking those scruples that belonged to his Western upbringing. But the girl looked so ravishingly pretty as she sat there in the half-light, and the scent of her body and the flowers in her hair filled the room, and there was a love-light in her eyes, so that he felt that to deny her would be more cruel than to take her . . . besides, he did love her, who could help doing so? It would be a lie to say that he didn't . . . but still, something, some fragment of that last qualm, perhaps a shred of divine pity, some instinctive fear of what might come of it all, held him back.

She noticed his hesitation, and some of the light went out of her eyes, and she looked round her a little helplessly. There was an old native lyre lying on the table, where Carstairs, after taking it down from the wall to toy with whilst he was waiting, had left it. She reached up and took it and began playing a weird, melancholy native air that thrilled upon the quiet night like the echo of sad spirits yearning ineffably for the unattainable joy that ever beckons them on and ever eludes them. Presently she began to sing softly, improvising, or perhaps adapting, some familiar song :

'Oh ! my love was lost by an ancient woe,
In the sad dead worlds of long, long ago,
And I searched and I searched through the vast Kalpa's flow,
And I sighed, I sighed,
Alas ! Ma Cho !'

She broke off the song to sigh in earnest ; but the weird air changed to a more cheerful, even triumphant, note, then sank back again to sadness as she went on :

'Oh! I found my love in the evening glow,
 When the stars their jewels on heaven's path strow,
 Yes, I found my love, but *my* love he would not know,
 And I wept, I wept,
 Alas! Ma Cho!'

As the song finally ended she gazed at him again, and found his eyes on hers with a look that brought some of the light back to her own. A pause, a silence—then the man held his arms out.

Maung Gauk had spent the night as well as the day in the jungle, but Mama Bwa's words had troubled him, and instead of going to the place of his dream he lay most of the time under a tree; but he could not sleep for thinking of his unrequited love for Ma Cho. He came back next morning, and as it happened met Maung Sawka just outside his house. The fellow greeted him with more than usual effusiveness and inquired whether there was any news of the tiger.

Maung Gauk, who disliked Maung Sawka intensely and was, besides, rather worn out and bad-tempered, made an evasive reply which the other chose to interpret as a confession of failure.

'Ah! well,' he said significantly, 'the Thakin—one of them at least—the young handsome one, will not mind waiting. Indeed, if you want to please him, don't find the tiger too soon, Maung Gauk.'

'Perhaps I shall please myself,' replied Maung Gauk.

The other laughed.

'Maung Gauk would like to get rid of a rival,' he said sneeringly; 'in vain, my brother, in vain. It is known that you do not fear to love the daughter of a Nat, since she is beautiful in your eyes, but the Thakin who does not fear the Nat even in the form of a tiger, what if he find the daughter beautiful too? Aye, and if he be pleasing in *her* eyes?'

For answer Maung Gauk turned his back and went into his house, where he took some food and lay down for a brief rest. Then he went round to the Thakin's quarters; but meanwhile some understanding of Maung Sawka's words had come to him, and as he passed through the village he felt that people were staring and even pointing at him, and, though he hardly dared explain why, he took a detour to avoid Ma Cho's house. And soon he knew that instinct had instructed him aright in that.

As he was hurrying back again with a raging heart he met Mama Bwa hobbling along, and he stopped and spoke angrily to her, but she only shook her head, sighing and saying that it was Karma, and that it showed how necessary it was to acquire merit whenever one could, and propitiate the Nats to keep away misfortune.

'Therefore, Maung Gauk,' she went on, 'thou wilt remember my word and keep close the secret of Shwe Thet. Only for a week, a week, for Maung Lauk, the rest-house keeper, tells me they must go in a week or so, and all will be peace again.'

'Peace?' said Maung Gauk, glaring at her.

'Aye, aye,' mumbled the old wife, 'peace for all of us, for me and for thee, for thou wilt not be troubled in thy heart because of this girl, since she will not be in thine eyes. It is done, it is done, and she goes with him. He will treat her well, for he is a good man as the white men go. Nay, go not so rudely,' she cried, as Maung Gauk made to depart. 'After all, "one bird is as beautiful as another," and the chief thing for us is to keep as much of the law of the Blessed One as we can,' she babbled on, 'and to avoid the anger of the Nats. Therefore I say again, keep the secret, the secret of Shwe Thet. . . .' But Maung Gauk was already out of hearing.

That night he went to the jungle again, and the next night, and the night after that, and he did not always lie under a tree, but sometimes he wandered about, half hoping for a sign of Shwe Thet, half hoping not to find one, and still he avoided the place of his dream. But all the while strange thoughts came to him, prompted by uncanny voices and weird whisperings from the rustling jungle, some speaking of renunciation, but others of different things; so the good and evil in him and around him wrestled for the mastery, and still the battle was undecided. And when each morning he came back the Thakin were annoyed, but to no purpose, for no one else would undertake to track the demon-tiger.

So the days passed by, but Maung Gauk's heart grew heavier and harder and more bitter at the thought of what had been and must be, and the voices of evil spoke louder than ever, and when at last the young Thakin said angrily that the tiger must be tracked that night, and even used rude words to Maung Gauk, the latter suddenly straightened himself as much as he could, and with a strange look in his unsightly eyes, said:

'O Thakin, I think it must be true what is said about this tiger. Were it not best to leave him alone?'

And when Carstairs mocked him for his folly, with a hinting accusation of cowardice, he only answered quietly:

'So be it. The Thakin must take the anger of the Nat upon his own head.'

Then Maung Gauk went away, and he adorned the shrine of the 'House-Genius' with sweet-smelling flowers, and filled its coco-nut bowl with pure water, and lay down and slept; but evil were the dreams that came to him, and always through them appeared that spot seen in his former one, the marshy, reedy pool, where game went in great numbers to water.

That night found him there. A wind was blowing from the south and bringing up heavy clouds that emptied themselves in sharp showers, and in consequence few beasts came to the place at first. But towards morning the sky cleared, the half moon was well up, and presently they came slowly and stealthily—elephant, buffalo, wild cattle, sambur and other deer, and here and there, lurking in the rear, the tracker caught a glimpse of the tawny coat of a panther or leopard, and every now and then would come a sharp cry, causing the game to start and sometimes scatter, and sending a shiver through Maung Gauk's breast. He crept about, however, moving round the pool on the side towards which the wind blew. The place was becoming deserted again, and he began to think the 'House-Genius' had failed him after all—ungrateful being!—but 'twas ever thus with spirits, as it was with men and, above all, women! The first grey streaks of dawn were beginning to appear in the eastern sky, and he was just deciding to give up and go home again when a noble sambur buck stepped out a few yards away on to a little clearing that edged the pool. Its body showed up very clearly as it stood with head erect sniffing the air that swept across the pool in its face carrying the jungle scents away from it. Maung Gauk, who had half risen, sank back into the undergrowth, and just as he did so what seemed like a dark shadow swept across the picture, and when it cleared the sambur was on the ground, and—yes—it was undoubtedly Shwe Thet standing over it.

And Maung Gauk thought, Now let the evil fall where it should.

He lay down in the undergrowth, and whilst Shwe Thet began his meal with an energy suggesting he was badly in want of it, the tracker, speaking under his breath, addressed him as follows:

'O Sakaru, mighty Nat, whom men call Shwe Thet the tiger, behold! thy enemy is mine also, and it may be too, if what some whisper be true, that he has brought shame on one who belongs to thee. Now, I will save thy life that thou mayest avenge both thyself and me. See to it. Let the stranger know the power of the Nats of Burma.'

Then he slipped away, muttering to himself, 'He is hungry and will come again to-morrow without fail—to satisfy both hunger and revenge.'

That same morning Carstairs told Ma Cho with glee that the tiger had been tracked, besides its freshly killed game, and would certainly be there again that night. He noticed that she looked frightened, and rallied her about it, but without result. On the contrary she clung to him now, begging him not to go, suggesting that the other Thakin should go alone.

He laughed, of course, adding, however, that it was unfortunate, but the Thakin Weston had a bad attack of fever and would certainly not be able to go that night, and perhaps not the night after, whilst it was by no means sure that Shwe Thet would await his recovery; moreover, he, Carstairs, was already staying longer than he ought to have done. No, *he* must in fact go alone with Maung Gauk.

At this news Ma Cho exhibited even more agitation, and throwing her arms about his neck pressed her cheek to his in the manner that is the Burmese substitute for kissing, and the perfume of the sandalwood filled his nostrils.

'Ah! beloved,' she said, 'be warned, be warned by me, who understand the powers of the evil spirits of our country. Alas! who shall understand them better than I who am called the "Nat's Daughter?" And it is true what men say of me. The Nat Sakaru is my father, and,' she lowered her voice almost to a whisper, 'his spirit dwells now in the body of Shwe Thet. Therefore let him alone if you love me, for I tell you evil will come to us both else. It is he who has brought the fever on your friend. It is a sign and a warning. Reject it not therefore, O beloved.'

He laughed again; but even as he did so there came the recollection of Weston's queer tale, and in a flash the explanation of the girl's strange words and of her unusually fair beauty.

'What was thy mother's name?' he said quickly.

That was it, he thought, when she had told him, and he felt pleased on the whole. She had white blood in her then. Weston's warning had in fact begun to echo rather too frequently in his ears of late. . . . At least if he was to be dragged down he would not have so far to go . . . besides, he need not be dragged down at all, rather should her white blood help him to raise her! He had better begin by reproving this gross superstition.

'Come,' he cried jocularly, 'we white people do not believe these

tales, and, if we did, the power of a bullet is greater than that of your mightiest Nat.'

She shuddered and drew away from him, looking at him with reproachful eyes.

'Nay,' she cried, 'if you mock me now you do not love me after all. But even so, even so'—she spoke wildly, with an almost savage abandon—'forget not that I love you. Refrain then, refrain, because of that, if not for the other reason.'

He looked at her uneasily. She was more beautiful than ever with the tears standing in her eyes and just the suggestion of a flush on those almost fair cheeks, but . . . Some realisation of the actualities of his position began to break in on him. There was a stubborn alien element that it would not be easy to eradicate, that might after all win its way over him. . . . Somehow as he looked at her he could not repress a queer feeling arising in him that there might be some truth in her story after all. One knew so little—there were so many unseen forces and powers. Who dare say for certain that there were no such things as higher spiritual essences existing and influencing the lives of men and women? It was ridiculous, of course, but accidents did happen, and who could say if it were only chance that caused them?

He brushed the thing aside and spoke to the girl rather angrily, forbidding her to reopen the subject. She submitted at once, but presently got down the lyre again and sang the song with the sad air. He had got hold of its words and meaning now and listened moodily. She seemed to have some perception of a softening, and summoned up courage, not indeed to seek to deter him again but to ask permission to safeguard him by a little rite of propitiation.

He refused, and she said no more then; only, towards evening, when he had gone to make some final preparations, she went out hastily and broke two boughs off the Amherstia, secured some tobacco leaves and a coco-nut from the rest-house keeper, and began to arrange them before a little improvised shrine of her own in a corner of the veranda. He came back in the midst of this, and angrily ordered her to dismantle the thing. She obeyed at once, and squatted, thinking and watching whilst he completed what he had to do and went out again.

Presently Maung Gauk appeared along the path below. Ma Cho could see him through a chink in the screen, and there was something about his expression that she did not like, that frightened her. He put his head over the veranda railing and saw the contemned

offerings lying on the floor, and she heard his laugh, that had an angry, scornful note in it such as he was not wont to display. He had changed had Maung Gauk . . . but he had no just cause of complaint. She had not deceived him. She put her head through the screen and spoke to him, telling him the Thakin was not in the room. Maung Gauk's face had always been ugly, but saved from repulsiveness by its good-natured expression. Now with rage disfiguring it, it might have been that of the Devil-Nat her father in his worst mood.

'What is the matter, Maung Gauk?' she asked tremblingly.

For answer he pointed to the discarded shrine, and with a laugh that was almost a snarl cried: 'Ah! boughs and leaves and a coco-nut. . . . Didst thou indeed think so foolishly as to suppose he would be propitiated thus? O, my sister, this is a Master-Nat, one who has his seat in the spirit-world near to the Man-Nat himself, aye, and speaks his will to the Death-Spirit, Gun. He will want more than this . . . something richer, aye, and redder even than these'—he threw out a hand contemptuously towards the faded *Amherstia* flowers. 'Go,' he cried, 'call thy master. The hour has come.'

Ma Cho looked at him for a moment with that terror growing in her eyes. Then she turned and hurried across the room with the intention of making one more appeal to her white lover. But Maung Gauk, who instinctively divined her intention, anticipated it by dashing round the house and reaching Carstairs, who was employed by the entrance putting the finishing touches to his equipment, before the girl.

'Come, Thakin,' he said, 'it is well that you are ready. It is already late and we have far to go.'

'Let us go at once then,' replied Carstairs.

The girl came to the entrance a moment after. He looked round at her and smiled and nodded. She answered nothing, but stood and watched till he had disappeared, always with that growing terror in her eyes. Then she ran back to her room, passed on to the veranda, and, dropping from it to the ground, slipped away along the path and under the trees, following in the direction of the two hunters.

As Maung Gauk had said, the way was long and the going slow along the narrow jungle paths, overhung and even crossed with interminable creeper and all the refuse of the forceful tropic growth. The shadows began to gather quickly before they reached the pool, and Carstairs felt, as he had never felt it before, the strange weird fascination of the tangled forest, with its eternal whisperings and rustlings,

a cry, a scream, a croak ; then here a murmur, there a sound as of a human sigh, and once the unearthly cry of a gibbon rang through the air, making even the white man stop and shudder and grasp his rifle more tightly, but with a queer feeling that it would be of no avail against the foes haunting these wilds. No wonder, he thought, that the natives believed so implicitly in their spirits and demons. Who would not believe in them amidst the shadows of these mighty trees and hearing such sounds, such silences, whilst the clouds swept overhead, shutting out the occasional glimpses of the gathering stars ? Ma Cho's bizarre tale came forcibly to his mind, and he felt really afraid. . . . Truly his nerves were not in a fit state for meeting a tiger, especially a tiger who was the incarnated spirit of a demon—the father of the girl who loved him . . . whom he had said he loved—meaning it. He tried to laugh the thing off as he had done before her, telling himself now that the girl's origin and the source of her belief were both obvious enough . . . but still he wished that Weston were with him, and he got out a flask of brandy and took a pull at it.

A few minutes afterwards Maung Gauk stopped, and, whispering that they were near the spot, pointed to a narrow gap in the undergrowth through which he wished the Thakin to go, he said. He would hold the rifle. Carstairs clambered through and found himself on a small clearing by the edge of the pool. There was still light enough to see the partly eaten quarry lying by the edge of it. Maung Gauk followed, drawing the rifles after him and handing one to his master, who noticed indifferently that it was not the one he had just been carrying. He opened the breech, and seeing the end of the cartridge closed it again.

As he did so there came the sound of a sharp cracking as of a broken stick, and then silence again. Carstairs looked inquiringly at Maung Gauk, who shook his head. It was too early yet, but indeed, he added, and there was a malicious note in his voice, though Carstairs didn't notice it, one could never say what a demon-tiger would be up to. The Thakin knew, of course, that his, Maung Gauk's, people believed these tigers to be immune, but doubtless the white man's bullet could overcome their charms.

Another sharp crack interrupted this whispered conversation, and even Maung Gauk looked uneasy this time. 'The Nat,' he muttered ; 'he comes to spy and cast a spell on us.' And he placed his hand upon an amulet he carried in his breast, muttering some formula to himself.

Now the darkness began to gather quickly, the wind dropped,

and only the more usual night sounds broke the long silences. Hour after hour passed, and the game began to come down as they had done the night before; but they kept well clear of the corner where the dead buck was lying, and presently a pale glimmer towards the east announced the rising moon. Shortly afterwards Carstairs noticed that Maung Gauk was no longer by his side. He looked round, but could not see the tracker nor the spare rifle he had been carrying. He thought little of the matter, however, and shifted his own rifle into a more comfortable position; then, an instant later, his body stiffened as he saw in the dim light a great tawny form creeping down across the clearing towards the dead deer. It was the demon-tiger. In a few seconds it was busily engaged on its meal. It had been Carstairs' intention to wait till it had eaten enough to render it slow and unaggressive, and he looked round again for Maung Gauk, but suddenly a strange cry rang through the air from behind him, a kind of inhuman chuckle, that might have come from one of those Devil-Nats, and it sent a chill through the white man's bones. The tiger, startled, faced round in the direction whence the noise came, and as it did so Carstairs heard Maung Gauk's voice—it seemed to come from the same place as that uncanny sound—crying out: 'Shoot, Thakin, shoot, the white man's bullet is mightier than the power of the Nat!'

Carstairs hardly needed this advice. Without waiting to consider what it all meant he took aim—it was an easy shot, even in the faint moonlight, for the tiger with its broad chest facing him not twenty yards away offered a splendid target—and fired. There was an answering roar, followed by that ghastly laugh, and a voice saying: 'O Thakin, the power of the Nat is great, is great, too great.' He looked round for his spare rifle. The faithless Maung Gauk was not there. He felt a mighty blow and tumbled backwards, half unconscious, with the smell of the great tawny beast in his nostrils. Then there fell on his ears another cry, a different one, a shrill high note, strung with passion and alarm, and a light, slender form, bearing the scent of sandalwood, passed between him as he lay and the beast standing over him.

Then he fainted, to awake when daylight came and find himself alone and but slightly hurt.

But of the demon-tiger, of Ma Cho and Maung Gauk, he never saw nor heard vestige again, and the people of the village merely shrugged their shoulders, talked of the power of the Nats, of Karma, and said it had to be.

A NIGHT AFFAIR.

(A MEMORY OF MAJOR-GENERAL SIR T. CAPPER,
K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O.)

BY BRIG.-GENERAL H. H. AUSTIN, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

It was one of those sultry, steamy nights in Lucknow when prickly heat still irritated the skin and temper of many exiles in that Land of Regrets. Being near the end of September, however, the worst of the hot weather season had been left behind, and a fair sprinkling of ladies had returned to the cantonment from their six months' sojourn in hill stations to join their husbands and fathers sweltering in the plains below. Although it would be another six weeks, or more, before the cold weather gaieties of Lucknow could be said to have set in, the various regimental crews were already training hard for the great regatta to be held on the Goomtee in the early days of November—a function which usually commemorated the fact that yet another long drawn-out hot weather had been safely relegated to the past. Thereafter several months of a perfect climate, in which to recuperate, lay before those whose stamina and self-control had been severely tested by the many weary weeks of heat, glare, thirst, flies, and mosquitoes, accompanied by the never-ceasing flap of the punkah overhead day and night.

It was good to feel that the eagerly looked-for cold weather was within measurable distance again; and the trials and discomforts of the past crawling months would now soon be forgotten amid the whirl of the brief Lucknow season. Thus the conversation of the officers of the 30th (East Lancashire) Regiment, as they sat round the dinner table out in the open compound of their mess, sparkled with the persiflage and amusing yarns which were so general at their hospitable board in those days. I speak with complete detachment, for I was but an honorary member of their mess, though treated almost as one of the regiment during the nine months it was my happy privilege to live with it. The prospects of the regiment in the coming regatta; in the infantry polo tournament later on; in the several race meetings arranged for the next few months; in cricket, tennis, rackets, duck- and snipe-shooting during the approaching winter—these and many other congenial topics afforded

scope for much animated discussion, and high hopes for cheery times ahead.

Meanwhile the punkahs continued to flick and creak over the heads of these sporting enthusiasts, who were arrayed in their white drill mess-kit, for it would be some weeks yet before the temperature at night would permit the wearing of warmer apparel. The still great heat of the sun by day was now somewhat tempered, however, by a comparatively cool stir of the leaves which had arisen after sundown; and the fiery orb itself had been replaced by a soft mellow moon, almost at its full, that cast deep shadows beneath the trees which lined the road along the rose hedge of the mess compound. The day's work and play done, a holy calm and pleasurable fatigue, promising a good night's repose under punkahs, pervaded the scene as we rose from the table and sank into long cane-bottomed chairs, or sought the diversions of whist.

Scarcely, however, had we sorted ourselves out according to our tastes, when a single shot rang out in the quiet night air from some distance down the road. Little immediate notice was taken of the interruption, for rabies was rampant at the time and the military police were authorised to shoot down stray pi-dogs wandering about the precincts of cantonments; and it was an ideal night for such shikar. Shortly after, several other shots resounded from the same quarter, followed by considerable commotion and shouts from natives; and suddenly one of the syces of the acting C.O. of the regiment burst panting into the compound, his eyes almost starting out of their sockets. Dashing unceremoniously into the lamp-lit area about us, he gasped out, 'Sahib, sahib, major sahib ka bearer pagal hogaya, aur goli marta.' ('Sir, sir, the major's bearer has gone mad and is shooting.')

The major was a married man, and had only a few days before been joined by his wife from England; so our anxiety was naturally great concerning their safety. We gradually elicited from the petrified man, however, that the major and his wife were dining out; and that after their departure the bearer had been unaccountably seized with a species of homicidal mania, and taken possession of the major's double-barrelled '500 Express sporting rifle and cartridges. With these he had cleared the compound, and was now loosing off indiscriminately at passers-by—in short, running amok.

Presently the mess-sergeant arrived to say that a bugler boy, whilst returning to barracks, had been narrowly missed by a bullet fired at him by some unseen hand, apparently from the major's

compound. Since the lad was armed with nothing but his bugle, he had taken to his heels and returned to report the matter to the mess-sergeant. There was evidently some truth, therefore, in the syce's story, necessitating prompt action.

Thus there followed a rapid break-up of the gathering, whilst officers hurried off to their bungalows to return with guns, revolvers, and other lethal weapons, with the object of surrounding the major's bungalow and capturing the madman before he could do any further damage. By this time all the inmates of the major's servants' quarters had either scattered far and wide, or sat cowering behind the securely bolted wooden doors of their shanties, devoutly praying, no doubt, that these might afford adequate protection against expanding bullets. Hence a strange silence hung over the theatre of operations when our armed party drew cautiously near the bungalow. The compound walls were carefully occupied according to plan without attracting fire from the unpleasantly armed maniac, who, it was hoped, had now been safely roped in. This was better luck than deserved, perhaps, for the white uniform of the majority of the ardent young officers showed up conspicuously under the bright moonlight; whereas the older and more experienced campaigners had taken the precaution to don their black great-coats prior to setting forth to round up the dangerous lunatic.

While securely ensconced along the perimeter of the extensive compound, here behind low mud walls, and there concealed in the dark shadows of the trees, it was possible to take closer stock of the situation. The full moon streamed steadily down on the cosy thatched roof of the now isolated bungalow. The madman had apparently retained sufficient sense, however, to extinguish all lamps inside the rooms when embarking on this insane outburst, for not a glimmer of light issued from the interior of the seemingly deserted house. The main entrance to the front of the building was obscured in the deep gloom of a wide veranda that ran round three sides of the bungalow, its roof resting on stout mud-brick pillars ranged along its outer edge. The space intervening between the borders of the compound and the house in its centre was entirely open, devoid of any kind of cover, and brilliantly illuminated by the bright moon overhead. Keen eyes quickly established the fact, therefore, that Ram Lall was not roaming at large in the garden with a formidable Express in his hands, with which to menace the lives of peaceful pedestrians. He must either be inside the bungalow itself waiting, peradventure, an opportunity to fire at approachers

from one of its windows, or lying up for a like purpose in the funereal blackness of the broad veranda.

Presently two muffled shots, fired in rapid succession, again disturbed the serenity of the night ; but no flash of rifle or sound of bullet was detected by those who had commenced to close in on the beleaguered house. A figure in white, however, was seen to break from the shadows of the building and to dash across the compound. Several guns were simultaneously levelled at the flying apparition, but fortunately triggers were not pressed before the fugitive shouted out in agitated Hindustani that he was the major's khidtmatar (table servant). He was drawn into the cordon and interrogated whilst the advance remained temporarily stationary.

It was then learnt that the man had been in hiding from the bearer's murderous intentions ; and seeing possible relief now near at hand he had decided to make a bolt for it at the first suitable moment. The shots just fired had evidently spurred his desire to be quit of his precarious place of concealment, and in a final frenzy of fear he fled from the accursed house, hoping for the best. He was lucky to join us unscathed, and able to state definitely that Ram Lal was inside the bungalow, where he had been raising Cain prior to loosing off the last two shots—at what, the khidtmatar was unable to say. Not at him, it seemed, for no one had heard the bullets.

The maniac was now clearly cornered, then, within the bungalow. The next thing to be done was obviously for a small party to ferret him out, whilst the remainder maintained watch round the outside of the building to prevent his escape from one of the many doors leading out of its back and sides. The adjutant forthwith volunteered to undertake this tricky task. Once the keenest of shikaris, he had abandoned that form of sport in recent years from humanitarian motives. He still remained, however, the best target shot with rifle and revolver among the officers in the battalion, but was averse to shooting down with his own hand an insane fellow-being, should such a painful necessity arise, even though he were a serious danger to his kind. And so the adjutant had merely armed himself with a stout walking-stick, and carried a bull's-eye lantern wherewith to search out the rooms and recesses of the bungalow. It was ruled by others, however, that he should be accompanied by two officers, who were to cover his advance with a loaded gun on each side of him and thus be prepared for all emergencies.

As the three officers darted across the open to gain the shelter

of the brick pillars supporting the front veranda, yet another muffled shot re-echoed from the interior of the bungalow; but again no flash was seen by the watchers without. Standing at the entrance, the adjutant called out in a loud voice, 'Ram Lall, idhar ao, aur banduk hamko do.' ('Ram Lall, come here and give me the rifle.')

The appeal meeting with no response, lantern in hand, the adjutant entered the gloomy building, throwing the light to his front and urging Ram Lall to surrender himself. Close on either side followed his two protectors, with guns at the ready and prepared for instant action should the rays of the lamp disclose the menacing form of the demented bearer. Along the hall, and peering carefully into room after room leading off it, did the trio proceed on their exciting quest. But no answering voice reached the anxious ears of those without from the darkened chambers within, though our senses were keenly alert for any sound or movement about us.

After some time the continued calls on Ram Lall to come forth and give himself up ceased. Then followed complete silence for some minutes, during which one vainly endeavoured to fathom its cause. We were not kept unduly long in suspense, however, for presently one of the bodyguard emerged from the bungalow to announce that Ram Lall was found lying dead on a charpoy in a small room off the kitchen. This at least was a satisfactory termination to what might well have proved an extremely awkward situation, had the madman opened fire with explosive bullets from close quarters on those who sought him out in the pitchy darkness.

With relieved feelings we entered the bungalow to view the scene of the tragedy, and by the fitful light of lanterns discerned the disfigured remains of the wretched creature stretched out limp across the flimsy bedstead. On the edge of this he had evidently sat with the deliberate intention of taking his own life, when he saw all chance of escape had vanished. Placing the muzzle of the rifle against his throat, he had apparently pressed the trigger with his big toe, and fired that last shot with horrible results.

His mutilated form was removed on the charpoy to outside the bungalow, and there handed over to the members of his now re-assembled family for decent interment; and by the time the major and his wife returned from their dinner party there was little outwardly noticeable to acquaint them of the untoward happenings in the house during their absence, save that a new bearer would require to be engaged on the morrow.

The incident described above occurred more than thirty years ago, and served to impress still further on us juniors what manner of man the adjutant of the regiment was. It had not been his good fortune up to then to see active service ; but in the years that followed campaigns crowded thick and fast upon each other in his eventful career. On the Indian Frontier, in the Sudan, and throughout the South African War he greatly distinguished himself before gaining high appointments in the Staff Colleges both at Camberley and Quetta ; and when the Great War broke out in 1914 the brigade under his command fought stubbornly, and lost heavily, in its efforts to stem the flow of Germans between Antwerp and Ypres. Less than a year later, whilst commanding a division, and now a knight, the gallant soul laid down his life for his country by fearlessly exposing himself to hearten his troops when placed in a perilous position by the violent onslaught of vastly superior numbers.

The nation was the poorer, in the hour of her sorest need, by the death of 'Tommy' Capper.

TAMARSIDE DIALECT AND THE LANGUAGE OF CHAUCER.

THERE is probably no district of England in which the dialect of bygone days survives more completely than in Devon and Cornwall. Here can still be heard the language of Chaucer, of Shakespeare, and of the English Bible. Words which compilers of modern dictionaries declare to be archaic still find free expression in these counties, for here is the old 'vulgar tongue' just as our forefathers used it in the days that are past. Folk from the shires are often puzzled by the expressions which they hear when on a visit to Devon and Cornwall, seldom aware that what seems to be merely a local dialect is in truth the old English tongue which each generation has passed on to its successor.

The observations of one who has lived for many years in a Cornish village close to the source of the Tamar may be recorded to illustrate this statement, which is interesting for many reasons.

A visitor to this district will notice that here we do not often speak of leaving a gate open, we leave it 'abroad.' He is puzzled perhaps and slightly amused. He uses the word 'abroad,' of course, in reference to France or Italy or other foreign countries, but not in the sense of 'wide-apart,' which is its old import. This use of the word is found, of course, in Chaucer, *e.g.*

'Thyne armis shalt thou sprede abrede'
(*'Romaunt of the Rose,'* 2563) (Ed. Skeat),

and in many places in the English Bible. 'Moses spread abroad his hands unto the Lord' (Ex. ix. 29). 'The eagle spreadeth abroad her wings' (Deut. xxxii. 11). We are apt perhaps to forget that we may have many times joined in singing of the storm when 'the clouds poured out water, the air thundered, and Thine arrows went abroad,' or of the 'righteous' who 'shall flourish like a palm tree and spread abroad like a cedar in Libanus,' or of the 'proud' who 'spread a net abroad with cords' (Ps. lxxvii. 17, xcii. 11, cxl. 5).

Of all the chapters in the English Bible few are probably better known or more often quoted than that which contains the story of

Naaman (2 Kings v). I confess that before I came into Cornwall I had never grasped the meaning of one word in the passage in which Naaman's indignation on the receipt of Elisha's message to go and wash seven times in the river Jordan is expressed. 'Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and *strike* his hand over the place, and recover the leper.' Now, *strike* in the sense of stroke, of moving the hand up and down over an injured limb, is a common expression in the south-west. I remember that soon after I came to my present parish, in paying a visit to a man who had met with an accident, I asked him how he was treating his injured limb. 'Well, sir,' he replied pointing to a bottle of ointment, 'the doctor has given me this trade to strike it with.' This sounded a somewhat drastic treatment, but I did not then know this old meaning of the word 'strike.' (*Trade*, by the way, is a very common expression for material of all sorts: so that a doctor's trade would be his medicine or ointment. 'I am only allowed milky trade' means 'I am on milk diet.') This use of the word 'strike,' so common in Devon and Cornwall to-day, is found again in the English Bible in the account of the arrangements made by Moses for the ceremonies of the Passover. The elders are to 'strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood' of the paschal Lamb (Ex. xii. 22). In the Book of Tobit, too (xi. 11), we read that Tobias 'strake of the gall on his father's eyes.'

Again, there is another word in common use, with a meaning often found in the English Bible. 'Terrible' means very often nothing more than 'singular' or 'remarkable.' 'I was terrified' does not always mean 'I was struck with horror,' but simply 'I was surprised.' 'Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things' (Ps. xlv. 4) is in the Vulgate: 'Deducet te mirabiliter dextera tua.' To show that 'terrible' and 'wonderful' were at one time interchangeable terms, it is only necessary to remark that while in the English Bible versions of the Psalms God is spoken of as 'terrible in His doings towards the children of men,' the Prayer Book version of the same passage runs 'How wonderful He is in his doings' (Ps. lxxv. 5). Again, of the two versions of another Psalm (cxlv. 6), the former runs 'men shall speak of the might of Thy *terrible* acts,' while the Prayer Book version is, 'Men shall speak of the might of Thy *marvellous* acts.' When one has grasped this meaning of the word, the common local description of a heavy downpour of rain as a 'terrible shower' becomes intelligible.

Sometimes one hears a handsome boy or girl spoken of as 'a proper lad' or a 'proper maid,' in admiration of physical fitness, proper in the sense of healthy, sound, and well-proportioned. This meaning is found in Chaucer, *e.g.* in 'the Coke's Tale' (4368), where the 'Prentis' is spoken of as 'a propre short felawe.' In Shakespeare too we find 'he is a proper man' ('Two Gentlemen of Verona,' IV, i.); and in the English Bible Moses is spoken of as 'a proper child' (Heb. xi. 23).

Another word which keeps its old meaning with us here to-day is 'ordain,' in the sense of plan, prepare, or arrange. Talking to a man the other day who was building a wall, I asked how he proposed to make use of a particularly large stone. 'Well, sir,' he said, 'I had ordained to fix it in yonder corner.' This use of the word is common in Chaucer, *e.g.* :

'And with this stikke, above the croslet
That was ordeyned with that false get'
(*'Chanouns Yemannes Tale,'* 1277).

'I have ordained a lantern for mine Anointed' (Ps. cxxxii. 18) is the translation of a word which means 'prepared' ('paravi' in the Vulgate). So, too, we find the English version of another Psalm runs: 'he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors' (Ps. vii. 14).

Broken china is commonly spoken of in this neighbourhood as 'sherds.' This word is found in old English literature: *e.g.* 'There shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth' (Is. xxx. 14); 'Thou shalt break the sherds thereof' (Ezek. xxiii. 34); and in Shakespeare:

'Sherds, flints and pebbles shall be thrown on her'
(*Hamlet, V, i.*).

The word 'just' has often a definite meaning of fitness and suitability. 'This cannot be easily done' is usually expressed by 'It isn't *just* to do it.' This too is common in Chaucer, *e.g.*

'Thou shalt me finde as just as is a squire.'
(*'The Sompnour's Tale,'* 2090).

There is surely a trace of this sense in the Latin Liturgy 'Dignum et justum est,' 'It is meet and right so to do.' 'Just so' has this meaning, of course.

The old use of the word *meat* for any kind of food, not necessarily flesh meat, is common here to-day. 'He can't eat his meat' is the

usual expression of 'He has no appetite.' The word is thus used in many places in the English Bible. One instance may suffice. In the account of the miracle of feeding the multitudes in the wilderness we read that 'they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full' (Matt. xv. 37).

From time to time suggestions are made that it would be well to retranslate the Bible and the Liturgy 'for the benefit of rustic congregations' as the cant phrase runs, but probably 'the rustic congregations' understand the old English Bible and Prayer Book better than many of these arm-chair critics suppose, and indeed probably better than the critics themselves.

Much of the language employed in local dialect is remarkably expressive and is found very often to have an interesting origin. 'Suant' or 'sewant' is a delightful word. It is used to express the smooth working of a piece of machinery or the successful operation of an undertaking. No doubt it comes from the French *suivant*. It is found in Chaucer, e.g. :

'all her limmes nere sewing'
('The Book of the Duchesse,' 959).

The word *more* is here commonly used for a root. Perhaps it comes from the Latin *morsus*, with the idea of biting a way into the ground. The roots of a tree and the fangs of a tooth are usually described as *mores*. This word is found in Chaucer, e.g. :

'The soothfast crop and more of all his lust'
(Troilus, v. 25).

The word that is usually spelt and pronounced 'crisp' is here often *crips*. This too is found in Chaucer :

'Hir heer that oundy was and crips'
('House of Fame,' 1386).

'Yes indeed' is often in these parts expressed by 'Ees fey.' *Fey* is an old English word.

'Nay,' quod Arcite, 'in earnest, by my fey.'
('Knights Tale,' 1126, Chaucer).

A large quantity is often called '*a plenty*,' cf. '*The plentee of joye by hunger and thirst*' ('The Persones Tale,' 1080, Chaucer). 'Pretty' and 'Fitty' are used in the sense of appropriate and convenient : so that a gentle rain after a spell of dry weather is

called 'a pretty little shower': and a door that is shut with difficulty is said not to work *fitty* or *vitty*.

The word 'gossip' is still used in Cornwall in its original sense of godparent, the habit of tale-bearing being usually referred to as 'telling' (cf. 'Tell it not in Gath'), or still more expressively as 'housing,' with the idea of going from house to house with a spicy piece of news.

A sad or distressing occurrence is frequently called a 'wished affair,' the expression coming either from the idea of bewitchment or of the glance of the evil eye, ill-wishing. No more scathing description of a man can be found than, 'He's a wished old trade.'

Sarcasm is often expressed by the employment of both adjective and noun in a sense directly opposed to the ordinary use. 'She's a pretty beauty' (pronounced *booty* and with impressive inflexion) implies severe condemnation.

If information is desired as to a person's whereabouts, the question is not 'Where is he?' but 'Where is he *to*?' although 'where' is used in its stationary sense. On the same principle apparently by which 'plenty' requires an 'a' in front of it, 'both' also requires a 'the.' 'He hasn't been to school to-day, because he has toothache and earache, *the both*.'

A piece of news has been read *on*, not *in* the paper, and the notion that a printed statement must be true is still prevalent in some quarters. 'Oh yes, 'tis true, sure enough; I seed it *on* the paper.'

The action of the bell-ringer is described as that of 'moving' the bell, and 'churching' does not necessarily mean the Thanksgiving after childbirth, but often a church service. 'Please, sir, is there any churching to-morrow?' A clergyman who prepares candidates for confirmation is sometimes credited with the performance of the Bishop's action. 'Yes, sir, I was confirmed at Morwenstow by Parson Hawker.' So a man informed me on one occasion.

In the matter of pronunciation, it is possible to discover traces of that emphasis on syllables which prevailed in olden times, as readers of Chaucer will have noted. A farm which in other parts of the country would be called Ford is here Forda. There is a tendency towards a final vowel, whether *a* or *e*. 'Worthy' is commonly found in place-names rather than *worth*. Tamworth, Isleworth, Rickmansworth are found in other parts of the country. Here we have Holsworthy, Bradworthy, and scores of places with a similar termination.

A well is often pronounced wēēl; a pōst is a pōst; a būllock is a būllock, the first syllable being pronounced as in 'dullard'; a sow is a zoo, and an ewe is a yoa.

Cornish people are credited with being superstitious, but the charge comes sometimes with a bad grace from people who delight in the use of mascots. Superstition is no doubt a failing, but at least it is a religious failing, and is often found with people who are God-fearing and reverent. Belief in witches and in the evil eye is still to be found, and certain things are considered unlucky. Cats born in the month of May are supposed to bring snakes into the house, and a suspicion is sometimes attached even to human beings born in that month. Strange remedies are sometimes employed for ailments and accidents. Some years ago an old woman told me of a cure that was considered unfailing in the treatment of an infant's complaint, 'the thrush.' A Psalm and a Prayer should be said preceded by the words 'Nummy dummy.' This sounded, of course, meaningless, but thinking it over I came to the conclusion that it was probably a survival of the days when the Latin language was in use, and that the words with which the priest began a form of exorcism 'In nomine Domini' had survived in the form of 'Nummy dummy.'

There are certain names for animals and birds which probably are of ancient origin. Moles are called *wants*. In Herefordshire these animals are known as *oonts*, and mole-hills as *oonty-tumps*. Plover are called *hornywinks*, and perhaps owing to the fact that they are plentiful in that parish, the *people* of Bradworthy are known as *hornywinks*.

Oxen of either sex are known as bullocks, so that bullocks and cattle are interchangeable terms. A rick-yard is a *mowhay*, a small shed a *linhay*, and *shippen* is the common name for a cattle shed. This word is found in Chaucer:

'The shepne brenning with the blake smoke'
(*'The Knightes Tale,'* 2000).

'Thropes, bernes, shipnes, dayeryes'
(*'The Tale of the wyf of Bathe,'* 871).

Of other dialect words, dust is often called *pillum* or *pilvum*. This may come from the Latin 'pulvis,' or 'favilla.' The homely dish of 'bread-and-milk' is nearly always described by giving milk the place of precedence. It is invariably 'milk-and-bread.' Crockery is *cloam*, and if it is broken it 'goes scat' (cf. Latin 'scateo').

Of flowers, daffodils are Lent lilies, usually known as *Lents*; a foxglove is a *floppy-dop*, and a periwinkle a *blue Betsy*.

There are two other words in common use, not only here but in other parts of the country, and though they are considered nowadays to be 'bad English,' they can claim the authority of the Bible for their use. There is first of all the word 'learn' in the sense of 'teach.' 'O learn me true understanding and knowledge' (Ps. cxix. 66, P.Bk.). The other word is 'serve' in the sense of 'behave towards.' 'Happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.' This is certainly the vulgar tongue, but the vulgarity is found in Chaucer too.

Enough has been quoted to support the claim which is here made that Tamarside dialect has a good history behind it, and in these days of slipshod speech and slang expressions, one might do worse than employ the language of the good folk of Devon and Cornwall.

On all sides we are faced with what is called 'standardisation,' a terrible word and a no less terrible thing. Procrustes is still busy in our midst, but an effort should be made to keep his hands off the old mother tongue of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and the English Bible, which is still to be heard in the west country, and, as some of us think, with charm and delight.

R. DEW.

*CHU LOW.**THE ROGUES OF KIANGCHI.*

BY DENNY C. STOKES.

HAD it not been for the man Chu Low, Kiangchi would to-day be a squalid group of mean mud and bamboo huts clustered along an elbow of a Chinese river ninety miles from the open sea.

But a town grew out of the village and grew apace. Mills reared their ugly walls, stone quays lined the river banks, and freighters crept in from the open sea and then slipped away again when once the horde of singing coolies had done their work. Europeans came and remained; consulates were opened, and on a brown ridge behind the town neat bungalows were built—and still Kiangchi grew, and all because of the original energy and wit of a small frail man with emotionless eyes, Chu Low.

Nearly every day he could be found working in the white block of offices down on the main quay where he controlled his score of interests, and with an expressionless face and mute tongue bowed to the homage which European and Chinaman offered him. Chu Low was the greatest power and brain in Kiangchi.

If the little man were not in his office near the loading ships he could be found in one other place, his garden away on the ridge behind the town. His garden was extensive, and every year, like the town on the yellow river, it grew not only in size but in beauty. Every year more colour was to be seen rioting within the bounds of the high brick tile-topped walls. Camellias grew there, alamanders and azaleas. Hydrangeas bloomed and throve, and high, compact poinsettias blazed from the shade of formosa trees and nipa palms. And it was through this garden that Chu Low frequently took admiring guests.

‘I like better,’ he would say, nodding to the flowers.

‘I like less,’ he would then add, lifting his chin in the direction of the town below. And when Chu Low spoke it was more often of his garden, and seldom of commerce, banking, ships, or money. Nothing gratified him more than when a guest complimented him upon his garden of exquisite shade and colour, running, flower-banked streams and winding paths.

How many of his guests thought that the frail merchant

employed an unnecessary number of gardeners? And how many people considered it queer that Chu Low tolerated two or three beggars dozing in the sun by the road opposite each of the several gates?

Perhaps the number of gardeners did not appear excessive, and beggars—well, everywhere in China there are beggars dozing in the sun.

But in Chu Low's garden there were just as many men lurking in the shadows by night as there were working in the sun by day. And beggars remained opposite each gate, not dozing, but wakeful and shivering in the chill wind which came sometimes from off the river when the moon was high. It must be remembered that Chu Low was a powerful man and wealthy. His climb to fame had been rapid. If he wished it or not he had left many unsuccessful rivals bruised in his soaring tracks. And these men might well attempt some crude method for thrusting home revenge.

Apart from the numerous gardeners and armed beggars, the garden had one other peculiarity. Of its many paths only one was straight, and that ended abruptly on the lip of a sheer ravine and, below, the waters of a torrent moaned and gurgled as if hungering to carry something down to the yellow stretches of the river, so that it in turn could carry the something away to the heaving sea, or cast it carelessly on a bank of weed for the sun to rot.

To this lip above the ravine Chu Low sometimes went alone. He would pause there with folded hands. The mask-like expression would vanish for an instant and he would smile. Then his lips froze thin and straight again as he turned away to the colours of his garden, there to touch the blooms with his delicate hands as if he were caressing jewels.

For twenty years there was peace in the low hills round Kiangchi. The town itself remained peaceful except for its commercial activity. Then news came—black news it was to prove. The telegraph spoke of Canton, Shanghai, and Hong Kong, and of riots. Soon the Press was occupied with accounts concerning war-lords and rival generals playing dangerous hands round Peking itself. Kiangchi worked on, ships came and went; but Chu Low put more men in his garden, and the blaze of blooms became richer than before.

Then trouble came to Kiangchi. It came suddenly, as if the southern winds had brought it secretly, softly, so that its bloodiness and fury might be more terrible.

The coolies of a Japanese-owned mill rushed the gates and spitted the owner on some rusty rails. That occurred at dawn. By noon-time two straw-hatted Chinese policemen had been ripped with knives and left to shiver in an alley—by evening a row of warehouses were furiously burning, and on to this blazing pyre the mob threw the daughter of the English chaplain. A score of hands had dragged her from her rickshaw, and her father in a useless frenzy hurled himself into a sea of yellow faces, to be in turn thrown lifeless into the putrid waters of the harbour. As night fell Chu Low's office and bank was burnt out, and the mob had already murdered every foreign seaman which it found in the orange-walled tavern called Chi-pi.

By midnight the first agony of the mob had abated. The crowd, singing and jeering at those corpses of its making which lay about the streets, wandered up and down the quays like a many-headed beast lusting for blood, but uncertain why it still hungered.

It was then that a small car purred its way into the centre of the mob and stopped, with an eager throng pressed close round. A tall, elegant man stood up and called for silence. At once a hush fell upon the crowd—it had listened before to the very able doctor, Halizz Noff. He had tended the bodies and poisoned the minds of the poor in Kiangchi for two full years. Hong Kong had known an Ivan Pretter, the police of Shanghai had searched for and failed to trap a certain Hans Klonstein—both Pretter and Klonstein had vanished, and there remained in their place Halizz Noff, the man with the Mongolian eyes set in a European face, and the manners of old Russia, though his lavish income came from the tyrants of the 'new.'

Halizz Noff was brief. He urged the mob to climb the hill behind the town and kill Chu Low. He urged again and pleaded. He commanded, all to no purpose—the pawns he had nursed for two years refused to be moved. Noff had made a mistake. He saw that the very name Chu Low had cooled the temper of the mob. The name of Chu had for centuries been associated with that of power, both spiritual and material, round Kiangchi. Even the besotted mob seemed to realise this as it listened to Halizz.

The doctor slipped away into an alley to think bitterly. For months he had helped to generate the trouble which was to sweep away the river port and leave a ruin from which those who were ready might snatch some gain. Noff realised that there was another

stronger than himself ; another he might make an ally ; another who might at that moment be his active enemy.

And there were two more that night who wished for success, who knew that success could not come their way unless Chu Low was their ally.

One of these was Chu Pu, waiting in the hills round the town to send his bandit soldiery yelling through the streets.

Chu Pu held his hand ; he was uncertain. Could he be sure that Chu Low would not organise the best of the population to resist his soldiery ? Or could he, by promising protection to his brother's property, be sure of a free hand to loot the remainder of the town ? Avarice urged Chu Pu to set his men upon the town, but fear—fear of the man Chu Low—made him cautious.

Likewise the old half-blind Mayor of Kiangchi fretted in his house. He also wished to pluck riches from such ruins as the riots might leave after they had passed like a typhoon through the twisted streets. But would Chu Low help him against Chu Pu ? Or would the frail merchant use the occasion to gain even greater power than he already had ?

Chu Pu, the Mayor, and Halizz Noff were puzzled. None of them could think of ignoring Chu Low.

While the mobs still roamed the streets, leaderless, angry, and hungry, three messengers left Chu Low's house, and when he had seen them pass upon the road he went into his garden among the flowers and touched the blooms as if they were precious things.

It was night ; the moon was up, the air was warm and rich with scents. The sky was every now and then stained with red, whenever some new conflagration in the town below became reflected luridly among the wind-creased clouds. Chu Low entered his house and waited.

Two hours before dawn a man was brought to him ; it was Halizz Noff. The doctor smiled insolently as he bowed.

'Well, so there is trouble . . . I come at once to the point. Too long I have been a servant of a new system which destroyed an old regime . . . in those days I had leisure and power without effort on my part. To-day, I have wealth that I may increase the power of my new masters and no leisure to speak of. . . . I am a servant who detests work but who dreads poverty. . . . Now, Chu Low, can we not direct the course of this conflagration wisely and to our mutual benefit—eh ? Your influence is immense, mine cannot be overlooked. We Russians understand the Chinese, eh ?

I need money. You need to secure a supreme position in Kiangchi without active rivals—I am one.

‘I need money to free myself from my distant masters. I wish to flee to a less tiresome atmosphere—say Paris?’

‘Ah!’

Chu Low’s voice was soft, his eyes expressionless, and his hands remained folded.

‘Tell me your plans.’

Noff burst forth eagerly and rapidly.

Chu listened.

Half an hour after Noff’s arrival the beggars at the gates saw another figure pass into the grounds of Chu Low’s house. They made no attempt to stop him. The watchers knew it was Chu Pu, the self-styled general. An owl had hooted once.

Later, an hour before the sun climbed up to colour the languid river, yet another man, this time led by a servant, slipped through the gate. It was the half-blind Mayor of Kiangchi. An owl hooted twice.

Chu Low met his guests in turn: Halizz, his brother, and the crafty Mayor. He took tea serenely with them, and each guest thought he was the only one who had been summoned to plan with the powerful Chu.

As dawn swept over the low hills an owl flapped away to its haunt and the beggars dozed at their posts. They had seen no man leave the house, and yet as the golden sun rose Chu Low was alone on his veranda painting a prayer upon a precious piece of embroidered silk.

Down in the town, two men watched a hungry mob parade the street below the window at which they stood. The crowd was passing noisily but aimlessly along the main quay of Kiangchi, and the two men were watching anxiously from the upper shuttered window of Manns’ Mills offices. One of them was a heavy-jowled, lumpy-shouldered American, Arthur Manns. The other was a slight, keen-faced youth, Bob Deal, a newcomer to the Chinese port and mill manager for Manns.

During the previous day they had remained behind locked doors. They had seen the chaplain’s daughter murdered beneath the office windows. It had been Arthur Manns who had held young Deal down on the tiled floor to prevent him racing recklessly to the aid of the girl when the mob set upon her. And Bob Deal had risen

from the tiled floor to brush the dust from his white clothes, and to curse Manns for stopping him as the old white-haired chaplain threw himself to death on the knives of the Chinese.

'See, you darned young mad Englishman, what yu'd have got if yu'd gone down,' Manns had said.

'I see, Manns. It would have been futile, but still it was the right thing to do.'

Manns had laughed at Deal's reply.

'Right, you teething pup; you mean crazy, don't you?'

The glow from the burning Japanese-owned mill still stained the sky as they watched, and from the windows of the French Consulate anxious faces appeared and disappeared.

'Getting easier in their minds,' grunted the American.

'Yes. I wonder what's the next move,' murmured Deal as he peered through the painted shutters.

'Don't know—can't think. My yella-faced boy says the town was expecting a devil called Chu Pu to come down from the back country. He ain't come. My boy also says some of these darned heathens say that the double-faced chink of a Mayor was working it for his own benefit. He ain't turned up neither. Then there's that smooth-mouthed, pretty-handed Halizz—a doctor, so he says. He's melted. Why the devil don't Chu Low come down? Peace suits him as much as it do me. I notice his mill didn't burn. Guess he's got some sort of influence on his fellow-chinks. Why don't he use it? It can't pay him having riots and the shipping shying away from the harbour. He is losing money. So am I.'

The American swore softly as he peered through the shutters again.

'Look here, sonny,' he began, suddenly turning to Deal, 'we'll drive up to that old chink, Chu Low, after midday if things keep getting easier. I'll tell the old yellow-skinned lump that I'll bank through him in future instead of using the Italian bank. That will fetch him, my business is big and growing. That offer will make him forget he don't like me. He ought not to want much urging, fer you see it's to his benefit to get the coolies to work again. And if they don't find work they may yet burn my mills.'

'Yes,' agreed Deal, 'and they may start sacking the Consulates. And there are women in there. I wish a warship, whatever her colour, would come in.'

'Yep, yep, fine if she did,' said Manns. 'Guess I'd like to see

a packet of U.S. marines swaggering around my premises. It would be good, sonny—eh ? ’

Deal nodded. ‘ To tell you the truth, I’d rather see the women taken off. But a warship would carry enough to protect both the women and the mills.’

‘ You know,’ went on the American, ‘ I don’t know why your people sacked you from home. Did me a fine turn, anyway. I wish I could handle coolies like you. Ours were the last to leave. And I bet all boots ours will be the first back when they sink their yellow madness—gee, I hate China.’

Manns dozed through the remainder of the morning heat. He lay stretched back on a long chair, a blue silk handkerchief drawn over his heavily fleshed face and iron-grey hair.

Bob Deal sat limply in another chair. He did not sleep. He listened to the occasional angry buzz of voices which came up from the quay. Deal would have welcomed sleep ; he could not forget the sight of the jeering Chinese mob battering the chaplain’s daughter. He shuddered as he sat and waited in the heat of the midday hours ; he wondered if things would come right, or if he and Manns would be beaten to death before night.

About two in the afternoon Manns and Deal went down to the ground-floor of the offices, and thence into a cool shaded courtyard. Deal started up the powerful car which stood there, while Manns arranged with two servants how they were to throw open the double doors which would give access to the quay.

‘ Right,’ called Manns as he pulled himself to his seat beside Deal.

The doors swung open, the car slid out into the glaring sun, turned to the left, gathering speed rapidly as it bumped over the loose cobbles.

There were few natives on the quay, the crews of some half-loaded junks leaned over their vessels’ sides and apparently were not interested at the sudden appearance of the car. But farther, in the mouth of the main street of Kiangchi, Deal could see a packed mass of Chinese. The roaring engine had attracted their attention. He saw men pointing and others running from looted shops.

‘ Go right ahead, dead into them,’ shouted Manns.

Deal heard the astonished hum of the crowd change to an angry growl and then to a chorus of savage yells as he headed the car straight for the human mass.

It parted before the onrushing car. The great vehicle’s bonnet seemed to cleave a way. Deal vaguely saw a sea of snarling faces

round him. His ears were full of the vicious threats which these faces were screaming. His nostrils were choked by the heavy rank smell of sweat. He knew Manns was warding off blows, he felt a stone cut his neck and he heard others rattle about the car.

He drove on madly.

A shot rang out. The bullet hit one of the forward lamps. Manns fired a revolver into the thick of the yelling throng.

The car roared on.

Quite suddenly the road showed empty ahead. They had left the mob. The angry hum was dying away. The car was clear of the last quirk-roofed house of Kiangchi, speeding uphill on a clear road in the shade of stunted China firs.

'Hell!' breathed Manns, as they passed the bubbling Kaju well under its triple roof of green tiles.

'Quite,' answered Bob Deal, as he swung the car round yet another corner in the winding, mounting road.

'Every egg laid by the Chinese dragon has sure hatched in Kiangchi,' growled Manns. But Deal did not answer. He was applying his brakes. They had arrived at Chu Low's house. They had stopped alongside his flower-decked veranda, and Chu Low stood on the steps bowing rapidly and fanning himself with a spray plucked from a blue gum.

'Say, Chu Low, we've got, but only just. I want you to say if you can't put things right in Kiangchi. Name of Chu Low weighs heavy hereabouts. Why don't you spread some of your darned influence? You could——'

'May I welcome you? I am glad you are unhurt.'

Chu Low's thin musical voice interrupted the American. The Chinaman bowed again and indicated chairs to the two Europeans in the shade of the veranda roof.

'Well, I'm cooked!' exclaimed Manns, for as he mounted the steps he saw Evrard, the French Consul, and Frani, an Italian engineer, standing on the veranda.

'You here?' said Manns, sliding his heavy weight into a chair.

'Yes, surely,' said the Frenchman; 'and I am here to ask Meester Chu Low to do the same as you have asked him—to bring peace to Kiangchi. Only he can so do.'

Chu Low stood near his guests while they settled themselves into chairs. His face was inscrutable, his manner suave, his few movements were slow. His eyes still stared with a peculiar fixity. The Chinaman looked like a frail waxen doll dressed in a tight

black coat which reached below his knees and was buttoned severely high about his neck. Blue trousers of a soft material showed beneath his coat and fell, narrowly cut, to his small feet, which were shod in dull black felt shoes, slightly curled at the toes. They were neat feet, as precise as his shaven head and oiled, plaited hair.

'Yep; now see here, Chu Low, can't you manage this wild brother of yours; can't you stop him bringing down his quick-handed men from the back-country—eh?' asked Manns.

'My brother is unable to lead his men. He is not with them,' said Chu Low.

'That so?' grunted the American.

'That man's influence has ceased—finally,' went on Chu quietly, but so deliberately that the Europeans looked keenly at him. It was useless. They could learn nothing from the waxen face of their host.

'And the Mayor of Kiangchi?' asked the Italian.

'I shall be Mayor to-morrow,' came the Chinaman's surprising reply.

'See here,' rasped Manns uneasily, 'what do you mean? What game have you played? Have you bought them off? If so, I am grateful and I'll pay my share.'

'No.'

'Have—surely you have not killed them?' suggested the Consul.

'Gentlemen, please be at ease; please believe that I have pulled away the sticks which made the fire which boiled the kettle of Kiangchi. Every stick has gone. The water already cools. To-morrow the hawkers will resume their shrill crying in Kiangchi. The cymbals and gongs will once more sound to keep the gods awake and to keep the devil journeying. The fish-market will be thronged at dawn, steamers and junks will load and unload and no longer rise and bow on the swell and lie deserted at the quays—and—'

'Yep, yep,' broke in Manns; 'but what about the mills—will they be working? Don't talk paint, Chu Low; let's have bricks. The mills may be burnt to-night. No police, no darned order, no pink Government—nothing.'

'No burning will take place. May I bring your notice to the river? There comes order. If you agree we will take tea.'

The Europeans looked eagerly at the river. They saw a long lean cruiser slipping easily to the anchorage. An ensign dragged in her frothy wake. A sigh of relief broke from the Europeans.

Chu Low was not following the course of the warship. His eyes were darting fire into the backs of his visitors as they leaned on the veranda rail watching the cruiser approach the crowded quays.

Not a muscle of Chu Low's face moved. His eyes did not flicker. His thin white hands remained still and clasped upon his sash. He was thinking fast. He was looking at Manns' broad back: Manns, the owner of two competing mills; Manns, who would soon build a third; Manns, the arrogant, competent rival of Chu Low. Then there was Evrard, who had cleverly effected the abduction and subsequent ruin of Chu Low's favourite daughter—Evrard, the narrow-chested, pig-eyed Frenchman. Yes he, Chu Low, had the proof, the absolute proof. Long ago he could have had Evrard broken. But in so doing disgrace would have descended on the house of Chu. No, he had waited to punish in his own way.

Then Frani, the young Italian, the engineer who was to build and supply the plant of Manns' third great mill; Frani, who had worked with Evrard in the abduction of Chu Low's daughter, and perhaps helped to ruin her; Frani, the sick man Chu Low had befriended and housed when fever was tearing away his reason six months before. Yes, Frani had expressed his thanks and left, taking away a valuable idol of superb jade. A thief. He had sold it. Chu Low had bought it back. The jade idol was in its proper place in an inner room.

Bob Deal—Chu Low's eyes softened as they rested on the English boy. A capable youth—loyal, very loyal, so loyal to Manns that Chu Low's offer of double pay had not lured him from the American's mills. If Manns no longer existed—then perhaps—

'Gentlemen,' said Chu Low, 'tea has been prepared. It is here.'

The Europeans turned to find that tea had been brought and stood ready on three low tables.

'You don't take—eh?' asked Manns, noticing that the Chinaman still stood watching his guests refresh themselves.

'When my guests are satisfied I will take,' returned Chu Low.

'Well, I'm easy in my mind. I take your word, Chu Low, about your brother and the others. Now there's a cruiser in the harbour, that means pickets and order in the streets; and your tea—well, I guess it's great. I'll just tell you I'm banking through your house now on. Good business for you, Chu Low, 'cause my business will grow thundering strong—next year the Manns' business will be the greatest in Kiangchi, eh?'

Chu Low nodded; and then he said suddenly:

'Mr. Frani, you admire jade. You collect jade. Come, I have a new piece to show you.'

The Italian started, but with an effort covered his uneasiness and followed Chu Low into the house. Once in the inner room Chu Low approached the magnificent cabinet and pointed to a small jade idol.

'Good piece, Mr. Frani. You have not seen it before, perhaps?'

The Italian recognised the idol he had stolen. A cry of astonishment all but escaped him. It did not. He felt suddenly faint, hopelessly sleepy, weak. Everything became indistinct. He slipped insensible to the floor.

Chu Low looked down on him for an instant, his upper lip curling slightly. Then he turned away to the veranda and stopped to survey a curious scene.

Arthur Manns was lying back in his chair breathing heavily. One of his fleshy hands still gripped the handle of a tea-cup. Evrard had crumpled up in his seat, his face wedged between his knees, his hands hanging limply down to the bamboo matting. Bob Deal seemed to be sleeping peacefully. He looked perfectly natural and at ease, stretched in a long chair.

Chu Low smiled. He called his servants, and while they did their work he painted a prayer of thankfulness on a piece of embroidered silk. This done, he burnt it as he held it in his delicate fingers. He watched the ashes scatter on the cool evening wind, scatter over the nodding blooms of the walled garden where rich scents hung heavily in the air.

Bob Deal woke to find himself staring into Chu Low's anxious face. He was still in a long chair on the veranda. Night had fallen. He was alone with Chu Low.

'You are well?' asked Chu Low in his thin voice.

'Yes—where are the others?' Bob Deal was on his feet. He looked puzzled.

'They have gone—for ever,' breathed the Chinaman.

'What do you mean? Have you—'

'Listen, Mr. Deal—listen,' interrupted Chu Low. 'My brother, Chu Pu, was here early this morning. Now his bandit soldiery have no leader. They no longer threaten Kiangchi. The Mayor, a worthless rascal, was here also; I am now Mayor. Halizz Noff no longer heals the ills of bodies or wounds the minds of men. He no longer stirs up the vilest in them. Arthur Manns was my rival; I now become selfish, I admit; he has gone. Evrard and Frani—

I now have been just; they have gone. One was the stealer of my daughter, the other thieved jade—also mine. All, Mr. Deal, have gone on a journey. I sent them upon it—ill-equipped, I will admit, to face their travels. But they have gone. Peace is in Kiangchi; prosperity will continue. The quays will hum with life at dawn. Police will be on the streets. Murder will not occur. But you, Mr. Deal, it would be a shame if poverty claimed you again. Remember, poverty was your state before Manns found you. I now offer you the management of my mill and of Manns'. I shall buy it, no doubt, or build another as he intended to do. Now he cannot. Your salary will be trebled—your home, why, another such as this. Your wife, my second daughter, if you will? She is beautiful, as delicate as any flower—you agree, perhaps?'

'What's the alternative?' asked Bob Deal weakly.

'Poverty! You cannot harm me. Nothing can be proved. If I had thought you could, you would have accompanied the others on their journey.'

'I agree—yes, I agree; but what's this journey they've taken, tell me.' Deal was uneasy.

'Come,' said Chu Low. 'Come.'

He led Deal out into the garden, down a winding path, through a gate in the blue-tiled wall where an alert watcher saw them pass. Chu Low led on to where the path ended on the lip of a shadowed chasm where they could hear hungry waters sucking and washing far below, as if asking for food of any shape to be thrown to them, so that they, the hungry waters, could carry their prey to the more open spaces of the harbour and devour it there.

'My guests drank tea which contained more than tea, and in drinking slept soundly. Sound sleep is bad equipment for a journey on the tides—the journey they have taken, Mr. Deal. The journey commenced there.'

Chu Low pointed to the black ravine.

Deal shuddered. 'But I——' he began.

'Yes,' said Chu Low, 'you drank tea, but were not sent upon the journey.'

Deal was filled with horror. But the sensation did not last long. A soft wind wafted it away, and Deal drank in the rich scent of a hundred different blooms as he walked back to the house with Chu Low, who stopped from time to time to touch some vivid bloom with his thin fingers. He touched the flowers as if they were precious things.

DAPHNIS.

*So was it written, and so was it said of you,
When God gave Creation to be your care,
On all things be the fear and the dread of you,
On beast of the field and on bird of the air.*

When Daphnis lay a-dying, that doleful summer day,
The creatures of the forest came about him where he lay :
Bright eyes amid the bracken and rustlings in the brake,
With secret lamentation that was for Daphnis' sake.

The beasts that knew his footstep, the birds that knew his call,
They followed where he wandered, loving and loved of all.
Was ever hand so gentle, was ever heart so good ?
Who will not weep for Daphnis a-dying in the wood ?

Dominion over all things—the ancient law stands true :
Those that be tamed for service the generations through,
And those, the untamed myriads, who mourned for Daphnis dead,
The wild things and the shy things on whom is fear and dread.

In vain your love and longing : you do as Daphnis did,
And wake to the enchantment where the forest life is hid.
You would not raid their fastness ; you would not harm nor grieve,
Yet nothing shall persuade them to trust and to believe.

Court them with all endeavour—the robin on the sill,
His round eye is upon you while your bread is in his bill ;
The blue-tit at the pea-nuts—a vision of delight—
Look on him to admire him, and he flashes out of sight.

Nation shall strive with nation, and man shall fight with man,
And their fury and their madness shall end as it began,
But these—mankind's opponents in the first and last of wars—
Still shrink away in terror, or growl behind the bars.

Daphnis, the perfect shepherd, alone could end the feud,
Could live at peace with Nature in the forest solitude.
Alone he knew the secret whereby the strife is stayed,
The enmity abated, and the old fear allayed.

*Mercy and kindness we know and we hear of you,
Yet this is the pact that is rarely sealed,
For on all things is the dread and the fear of you,
On bird of the air and on beast of the field.*

ALFRED COCHRANE.

BEGGARS AND VAGABONDS : THE BLIND BEGGAR.

HALF-WAY between the town and the English colony stands a tram or 'bonde' shelter. It is only a cemented floor with a tin-helmet hat, but invaluable in the hot weather as a protection from the sun and in the rainy season as the only dry foothold in a wilderness of puddles. A square of houses surround it; two or three mansions with their electric-lighted tennis courts, their exotic bird ponds and marbled atrocities; one or more so-called cottages, capable however of housing a round dozen; close by the convent schools with their wondrous flower-gardens, a good source of income to the careful nuns. At this woebegone spot on the Equator flower shops are non-existent. In moments of belated stress one can buy a beery bunch of wilted flowers in the smaller taverns, but can search for the gay window sporting the fancy buttonhole, the lover's basket, or the 'prima donna's' bouquet till one fades away in exasperated perspiration. This little district belongs to the *élite* with their grand homes and educational centres, yet the roads are so incredibly bad that they are rivers of mud, and the little oasis in the centre, though a marked and pathetic contrast to the surrounding wealth, forms an agreeable meeting-place for the niggers and all those poor unfortunates who frequent half termini throughout their lives.

Here for interminable ages an old man, respectably clothed, with shaved grey head and palish stubble on his chin, sat day in and day out; in his hand he held the rounded half of an old Dutch cheese tin, which he swung to and fro as he sang. He was blind, but one only noticed the fact from the curious sunken appearance of the eyes, which for some indefinable reason added to his respectability and made his loss of sight as much part of him as other men's eyes. He was a beggar, of course, but he worked hard. All day long without a drink, apparently without food, the old man slouched on a backless stool, singing. His real work began when the 'bondes' wheezed up to the junction. He heralded the approach by song, the principal object of which was to manufacture a sound sufficiently loud to publish his being and to overcome that produced by the terrible brakes of an outworn 'bonde' system.

He did that!

The words were rarely distinguishable, but they ran something after this style :

‘ Give your tithes to the poor and needy,
Give for the love of Christ ;
Protect the dying and the seedy,
By the sacred blood of Christ.’

A ribald rhyme to non-Catholics and mere doggerel, but it served. Just an old and weary man planted on a scrap of cement among the filthy roads, swaying and waving a battered tin and shouting above the noise of modern civilisation for alms, bandying a hundred times a day, carelessly and irreverently, the name of Christ. But it served . . . for none cared.

Clatter comes the bonde, the song loudens, passengers hurry up and down trying to find a seat, agitated and hatless nigger girls giggle and jump in, others push up their unwieldy elders, and through the confusion, whistling, screaming, and shouting, comes the raucous voice, the blasphemous voice, and the piercing, professional whine of the small boy who touts the tram passengers for money for the old blind singer. This boy also is remarkable in his way, for he is the image of a greenland faun, but so dirty and unwashed that he is only a poor image, sullied and muddied by the merciless rain of a long winter night. The imp’s love of mischief, the listening, sensitive, pointed ears are his, and the graceful spring as if he had been blown there by a puff of wind and having laughed his fill would be off again to cleaner, better places. The child’s wide smile is so infectious and the suppressed humour in his eyes is so amazing . . . for amazing it is to find laughter where pathos and sordidness only seem to exist . . . that many a man throws a coin for the old beggar’s song and the young boy’s spirit. Immediately the money falls he becomes the ordinary Cockney waif or Parisian gamin, dives under the bonde, puts it between his teeth and, with a knowing wink, to show it has passed the test, tosses it, jingling madly, into the old man’s tin. Instantly the song ceases at the end, middle, or beginning of line or word . . . no matter where. He slithers it into a fumbling hand, and feeling it expectantly puts it in the patched pocket, and the old rattling voice cracks on in hope of further alms, once again evoking the name of Christ. The tram screeches on its noisy way, and the song stops for lack of audience.

Day in and day out the old man held the fort, known and loved

by all regular travellers ; but one day as we neared the station we missed the customary song : instead, an infernal clamour as of souls in direct bondage hurtled through the air. There the old man sat, as usual, singing, but close to him a woman stood with an accordion and, if the song was that of an amateur, the playing was that of a mad woman. Sounds issued from the instrument which occasionally bore a slight resemblance to some archaic tune, but more generally it was excitedly inflated and deflated with a pure desire for noise and a blissful disregard for melody. The poor old singer was doing his best, but his quavering worn-out voice stood no chance against that mechanical horror wielded by an enemy's hand. Intermittently, when the player paid some attention to her fingering, you could hear a fleeting echo in the background : 'Protect the dying and the seedy,' but only for a mere flicker of the eyelid, for the moment her adversary became audible the woman clenched her teeth and her fingers and plumped for noise again. The poor imp did his best, but his shrill treble was also drowned, and the few coppers that were flung were now fought for by the woman's boy, who being stronger and bigger was generally victorious. The bonde moved on into silence ; I smiled awhile and then forgot.

The next time I chanced that way the struggle was still continuing, though it was a one-sided business at best, and the poor old man was putting up but a feeble fight. His voice was perceptibly weaker ; his self-confidence gone. He had a tin of water by his side now, and he only sang at intervals after a pull at the drink. His sad old voice was jagged and worn, and his song, no longer a pæan of thanksgiving, had degenerated into the customary prolonged wail of the door-to-door mendicant.

The noise, indeed, of the half-way station was nigh unbearable, and hands that were pressed to ears could not be occupied in almsgiving, as both the participators in the contest were discovering. The woman, however, would not surrender and, as her object for being there was obviously less for gaining money than for personal vindictiveness, there could be no doubt of the issue. I gave a penny to the faun of the wayside ditches and passed on regretfully.

Again I passed, and this time the old man had gone, though still the crazy accordion blared out its well-worn tune. I thought the woman, though triumphant, was finding victory unprofitable and unpalatable, for we were all peevish at being deprived of our old, blind beggar, who had sung to us through the ages, wet or fine ;

we were also full of wonderment as to his whereabouts and inclined to be jealous of that other station who had gained our antique. Many there were who laughed and did nothing ; others were indignant and did less ; some stood up and, gesticulating, cursed loudly, creating much excitement, the first heat of which, as the bonde tactfully bumped on its way and they were forced to resume the normal, gradually subsided. We all, however, talked and thought of nothing else.

The next day, I, having been deputed by the regular travellers to right the matter, instituted inquiries.

The old man had not been stolen away to some rival line, but had simply disappeared. It seemed an impossible feat to discover his whereabouts in a place where thousands of broken-down mud huts were thrown up by the roadside, on the rivers, in the marshes, anywhere and everywhere. By dint of alternately bribing and bullying the woman's boy I found out that he lived, or used to live, in the most God-forsaken spot in a devil-haunted town. I went down there one day to see what I could find. Climbing out of the bonde I began a search for the house, which alone required untiring pertinacity, as none of them had numbers, the street had no name ; there was, in fact, no road. Rows of mud huts, some tattered and torn, some all forlorn, some heeling drunkenly over to one side ; others had a wicked leer, and grinning rents in the walls, and roofs made of rusty bits of scrap iron complained and clattered in the breeze. A few on the roadway were respectable citizens, who held themselves proudly with an attempt at a garden and new plaster, but even they had their parasites, for leaning affectionately at the back would be a less worthy brother, or slantwise to one wall a dusty tramp of a house would sprawl nonchalantly. In all, black, yellow, white, hundreds and thousands of naked, big-bellied, spindle-shanked children ; in all of them slept, ate, and drank numerous Severinas, Josés, Marias, Antonios, quite indiscriminately mixed as to wives, children, and relations, but fiercely possessive with their money, coloured rugs, bits of broken china.

Aghast at the difficulty of finding one old man and a small grubby boy amongst such a seething mixture of nationalities, I stood for a moment, and, being an obvious foreigner, was instantly besieged by a crowd of children. From all corners they ran, like the rats in the streets of Hamelin, big ones, little ones, brown ones, white ones, lean ones, fat ones, ran . . . they scuttled to the Pied Piper.

'Esmolas! Alms!' they shrilled. 'Money!' they wailed.

Eager little grubby paws patted my arms, shining greasy bodies dried their sweat on my trousers, tiny faces with their dog-like eyes and long, curling lashes and their sore mouths and noses gazed at me as if I represented their last and only hope of salvation. Being an old hand and wise, I remained outwardly calm, nor did I drive them away. I should never have found my blind beggar; I should have been pelted with abuse and dirt from the curved corner of their houses, from behind the water tubs; dogs would have yelped, women would have screamed, and children danced, and I . . . well, I should have retired in bad order. I slipped a judicious hand in my pocket, and the nickel rattled. The clamour renewed a thousandfold, but as I at once withdrew it and regarded them in stony and disapproving silence for a while a comparative quiet ensued.

'Does anyone know where a Senhor José' (note the 'Senhor') 'lives, an old man?' I brought out a handful of money.

'Senhor José? Do you mean José the son of Antonio, or José the Carpenter, or José the Dustman?' or So-and-so, *ad infinitum*, till I held up my hand in despair.

'Listen, children: I do not know which José it is, but it is an old blind beggar who used to sing at the Pont d'Uchoa station. He had a small pointed-eared boy with him. . . .'

'Oh, José the Songster he means. . . . 'No, he doesn't. . . . It's José the Beggar.' 'But, you little fool, *he* hasn't a boy. . . . 'No, it is José the Songster. . . . 'Yes, it *is*,' the voices chattered on, arguing and disagreeing among themselves, but finally they joined in a triumphant shout:

'Si, Senhor, it is José the Songster you want.' Then a babel and a jostling and a pushing.

'Here, Senhor, I'll take you! . . . 'No, I will! . . . 'Look, Senhor, how big *I* am! . . . 'Have me, Senhor, have me!'

In desperation, I seized upon a coal-black infant with intelligent eyes and demanded to be led, forthwith, to Senhor José the Songster, inwardly convulsed at the ineptitude of the title. We were still, however, followed by the entire crowd, beseeching me to give them their reward, threatening me with an evil future, vaunting their claims as a guide.

'Little one, if *you* take me there, I have something in my pocket, understand? If you do *not* . . . I go away, I have no one. I do not need a hundred boys to guide me to one man's house, nor have

I a hundred milreis in my pocket,' I whispered significantly. My diminutive guide nodded and wheeled round in a fury of rage. He shouted, he screamed out insults, he doubled his tiny fists, and the crowd silently melted away, cowed, perhaps, by his wrath, though more probably, after his rapidly aggressive explanations, they philosophically gave up their victim. The small fellow turned, his face wreathed in smiles.

'I, Antonio, am a great fighter. They ran before me. The Senhor can now follow without fear'; he beat his great stomach, and the Senhor, smiling unseen, followed.

Soon we reached the house, and putting my hand in my pocket I dismissed the boy with a word for his valour and a milreis for his hunger.

I entered the house. There on the floor, with his face to the wall, lay the old man, no longer clean, no longer respectable. The boy leant against the door spitting disconsolately on the floor, which was only cemented roughly, cracked in places and the ruts clogged up with dirt; the air reeked with tobacco, unwashed bodies, and the half-rotting remnants of forgotten meals. Here in that overburdened atmosphere of 120° of stale heat he had wilted sadly. His very ears drooped and his eyes were half closed. A faun dying of imprisonment! and I marvelled at the fidelity which kept him at the side of the old man instead of laughing and sporting in the street for the mere handful of coins which would give him food for days.

'Why don't you go and earn money, boy?' I asked, half impatiently, half tearfully.

He shrugged his shoulders.

'He won't eat.'

'And you?'

'Patencia.' (Patience! God! a mere ragged beggar's boy praying for patience to die at his post.)

I turned to José and shook him round to face me.

'José, speak, what is the matter?'

He lay there uncomprehending.

'Man, cheer up. . . . Come again and sing to us; we want you back.'

He but groaned in reply.

'What is your name, boy?' I asked.

'André.'

'Well, André, I have come to help—help, do you understand? For Heaven's sake, wake him up, André, before it is too late.'

The boy quivered in a sudden dawning of hope and crossed to his grandfather's side.

'Grandpapai, wake, see, an Englishman. He wants to help.'

But the old man remained in his despairing stupor.

With a cry born of the struggle for rebirth, the boy flung himself on the man and beat him with his fists.

'Grandpapai, get up. I am so hungry, and I want to live!'

Whether the words or the unexpected movement stirred the old beggar, I know not, but he roused slightly from his miserable lethargy, roused enough to make a whispering inquiry as to our errand.

'Look, José, we all miss you at your station. You have sung to us for years. Come back.'

'What is the good?' he wailed; 'that woman . . .' and the recollection overpowered him so that he sank back, turning his face to the wall once again.

'Who is she?' I rapped out fiercely, hoping to arouse the man. I looked at the boy for answer, but he shrugged his shoulders and pointed to his grandfather. 'Who is she, José? We will send her away.'

My rash promise acted like magic on the poor fellow.

'If the Senhor could, if the Senhor only could!' he spoke in breathless excitement. 'But no, she is a hag, that woman'—and with the quick despair of his race he reverted to his former listless apathy.

'José, I can, I will,' I said, boastfully, to quicken his interest, 'if you will tell me what she is to you and why she hates you so.'

'She was the woman of my son, and that young cub their son. He left her; she was a virago, that. . . . He took another. André'—he indicated the boy with a suggestive finger.

'I see. She has good reason to hate your son. But where is he? Why doesn't he support André and you?'

'Oh, he . . . he has taken another woman,' José said indifferently.

'Heavens!' I ejaculated feebly. 'I'm afraid your son must be rather a desperado.'

'A desperado?' the old man echoed in surprise. 'Mais que quer o Senhor? What does the Senhor want then? It is nature . . . what will you? He does no harm.'

'But,' I stammered, 'what about André, the woman he has left, and the first woman and her son?'

'How the Senhor is stupid! André, he is all right; there is plenty of food on the trees for the picking, there is plenty of sun.'

‘And his mother?’

‘Oh, she—she has another man. She is quite content. It is only that wretch who causes trouble. I told my son’—his voice grew louder and louder—‘what would happen if he took up with her,’ and he rocked himself to and fro in past prophecy.

‘But, José, why is she wicked? What . . .’

I buried my head in my hands, momentarily deprived of all speech. What could one say to such placid non-morality? But why should one woman be happy and the other vindictive? I put the question to him.

‘André’s mother, she is black,’ he replied. ‘She is a sensible woman. I told my son what would happen if he took up with that other woman,’ he emphasised by repetition. ‘She is wicked. She is white. She is greedy and too energetic. You see, Senhor, we natives are peaceful; we may be angry, and very angry so that we kill, but nothing lasts. We are too lazy. These white no, they are so energetic that they hate a long time, love a long time. It is different; it is not good to mix.’

The old man delivered himself of his profound philosophy, casually, unsmilingly, as if the truths he uttered of life, death, and racial hatred were mere trifles flung out in light conversation.

My brain rioted with chaotic and conflicting emotions. A man circled about from woman to woman, women revolved from man to man, and the only female who showed annoyance was calmly designated as wicked. What a life! What people! What a country! One more question impelled itself from my enfeebled mind.

‘But, José, why does she torment you now, after all these years?’

‘She happened to see me by accident (the devil take that accident!), and seeing me she remembered her grievance. Since then she has tormented me’—and he wept sorrowfully.

‘Do you mean to say,’ I shouted, ‘that for eight years she forgot, and because she happened to meet you, recalling, she ruined you? My God! the thing is incredible.’ I felt as if I was going mad. ‘But why, why?’—and I shook the old man in my bewildered frenzy.

‘Deus quizer. God who knows,’ he remarked patiently.

Suddenly I understood. True, God alone knew. The native nature was beyond reason, and they in their simple knowledge accepted the fact. It behoved me also to learn my lesson, and, having learnt, remember.

The old man, excited by the recital of his wrongs, had forgotten his dumb anguish, whilst the boy, adoring, sat at my feet in eager anticipation of instant rescue. The concentrated stare of the two made me nervous, and I felt that I must instantaneously prove my ability, or remain for ever a discredited god.

'See here, André,' I exclaimed, after a moment's deep thought. 'Could you raise five boys willing to do a few hours' work . . . for a reward?' I added.

'Si, Senhor, easily.'

'Look here, then; this is my scheme. You, José, go back to your post and your singing, and André, too, with his five friends. We shall all be pleased to see you back and the coppers will flow; but,' I said pointedly, 'André and his five will be too strong for the other young fellow.'

On the old man's face for the first time that day a wan smile dawned, which steadied itself into a laughing chuckle as he watched André, who, with all the quick resilience of youth, was turning somersaults in his exuberance.

'Well, José,' I continued, 'what do you say? Will you come to-morrow?'

'Como não? Why not, Senhor?'

'André, can you bring your little troop of warriors? Here is some money for them.'

'Of course; but, grandpapai, it will be fun. How I long for to-morrow! Won't we beat Severino? He thinks he is so strong, the great bully. We will see now'—and he cartwheeled again.

'Yes,' answered José, with vindictive smugness, 'we'll teach the old wretch a lesson. We'll see who is stronger.'

'Now, you two,' I warned, 'this is to be taken as a good game, understand? If there is any roughness, any knife play, I call the police. Beat her if you can, and good luck go with you; but mind, beat her fairly, at her own game. She did no bodily harm to you. See that you do no bodily hurt to her. André, do you understand?' I said sternly, for the boy's face had gone suddenly blank, and I knew he was preparing to swear if he disobeyed that he had not understood the English Senhor's Portuguese.

He did not answer.

'Hand me back my money then, and I go.' I wrenched it from him and turned to the door in anger.

'No, Senhor,' André called. 'I understand, no roughness—'

I understand, oh, quite well. Give me back the money. We . . . we have not fed for a day or so.'

'Yes, Senhor, the boy knows. I'll see that he does. There will be no singing, André, if I have to die in prison. When I die, I will die here.'

The boy flung himself upon his grandfather in a paroxysm of tears.

'Oh, grandpapai, I didn't mean anything. I will be good. I will, I will, I will !'

'All right, André'—and I returned the money. 'There, buy yourselves a good meal. I will see you to-morrow. Good-bye.'

.

I caught the tram the next day full of amused wonderment. From afar I could hear the accordion going and, yes, now and then, faint but persistent, the blind beggar's song. As we came into view of the junction we all peered out, interested and smiling, for there was José singing with an expression of religious fervour on his face, surrounded by a bodyguard of small ruffians ; there was the woman playing desperately, with her one boy posturing valiantly enough before her, though he eyed the gang beside him askance.

'Hallo, José, where have you been ? Glad to see you again!'—and several of the more effusive jumped out to pat him on the back and press a coin or two personally into his hand.

'Thank you, Senhor, thank you, thank you,' he reiterated repeatedly, and at each expression of a gratuity received the woman stamped with rage.

'You wretched scoundrel, go and fight for them. We are being robbed, Severino, you cowardly son of a rascally father !'

Thus admonished, and also because he was literally pushed into the fray, Severino made an attempt to pocket some of the prey, but he was defrauded, and battered and bruised he emerged from the encounter with sore head and sulky demeanour. The coins clattered into José's tin, and he raised his sightless eyes in thanksgiving ; so, laughing at his enemies' discomfiture, we started on, followed by answering shouts from the down-going tram.

The next day I was an hour or two later than usual, and was annoyed to find my tram hung up outside the junction with three or four in front. For a moment I thought it was a block caused by the frequent breaks on the line, but I was only too soon aware of an unexpected bustle and excitement. Hoarse shouts and screams

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floated through the air, a confusion of voices, and as I clambered out of the bonde I saw a great concourse of people surrounding the station, all eagerly craning their necks and standing a-tiptoe with interest. I hurried along in company with the others, assailed with a sharp misgiving, and regardless of the hindering bodies I elbowed my way through the throng, and won to a front place. On the platform was a group of boys fighting, yelling, screaming, swaying now this way, now that; now falling down in a mass, which heaved itself upwards only to stagger drunkenly for a while and then collapse, now a glimpse of glistening black bodies, little claws, pulling and plucking at the few rags of clothes that were left. On the outskirts the accordion woman pranced a dervish dance of excitement, urging on her followers, and José, who had somehow got hold of her instrument, was pressing it and waving it over his head as he shouted some wild battle song of his own. The conductors and drivers of four trams were there, regardless of their duties; four loads full of passengers were there, regardless of their appointments and all of them dancing like lunatics, betting, shouting, laughing, slapping each other on the back and urging on the combatants. Now the outcry was good-humoured, but a word, a glance, and knives would flash and many lives be lost over the silly jest of an English fool. I dashed at José, seized the accursed accordion, and clapped my hand over his mouth. I startled him into soberness and then whispered urgently.

‘José, are you mad? Where is your promise? The police will be here shortly, and all the trams are stopped. Call André at once and come away before you are taken!’ To do him credit he took in the situation with marvellous rapidity.

‘André, André!’ he shouted imperiously.

A wild roving eye and a tuft of black wool emerged with difficulty from the tearing, biting crowd. It recognised me.

‘Ah, Senhor, good luck, we win, we win!’ a breathless voice harsh with excitement bawled out, and then all the three bits of André were re-collected and submerged.

‘André!’ I yelled. ‘André!’ José screamed.

A convulsive heave and struggle and a little body shot out and rolled to our feet.

‘Well, what is it now?’

‘André,’ I said, ‘you cannot go on—the police will be here soon.’

‘But, Senhor, if we run away now, all is lost.’

'Nonsense, André ; you must help me stop this and then both of you must go away. To-morrow morning come to my house and I'll explain.'

André shrugged his shoulders. 'It is the Senhor who knows. *È o Senhor qui sabe*'—which is the polite native way of saying that he thinks you a damned fool.

Together we plunged into the crowd of fighters, and after much buffeting and loss of breath managed to separate the sheep from the goats.

'See here, Maria,' I said sternly, 'tell your boys to be quiet. José and André are going home. You have won for to-day. Go away, José, now'—I turned to the others—'you have done enough.'

They caught up their possessions and went, very unwillingly, pursued by a torrent of abuse from the triumphant Maria. And the crowd, now the fun was over, remembered their businesses and ran, laughing and pushing, to their trams, whilst I cursed at the happy obliviousness of the native to all but the present and at the self-conceit which had blinded me so absolutely to the inevitable results of my wild plan.

The next morning I presented André with a very rascally little mongrel that was my devoted friend. His legs were much too long, his body much too short, and his head much too large, but he possessed a humorous eye, a quick intelligence, and a great love of music. We then, all three of us, took the next bonde along.

Maria was, as I expected, holding the fort, aggressively victorious, surrounded with an even greater regiment than before. As the next tram appeared, she struck up loudly, and the boys gathered themselves together to garner the harvest. José remained silent, and André moved a little nearer the line with the dog. That was all but enough. The accordion had played but a few notes when the dog lifted up his voice and howled, howled loudly, mournfully, and with all his heart. The effect was irresistibly comic, and with one accord we laughed. The woman stopped playing in exasperation and the dog ceased to sing ; she started again hopefully and he immediately accompanied her with enthusiasm.

'Someone stop that beast !' she shrieked ; but my Peter was too good a dog to allow any antagonist near him.

She tried again ; again he howled loudly, mournfully, and with all his heart. Once more she was greeted with a loud burst of laughter as she frenziedly flung down her accordion. The moment the music ceased Peter bared his teeth in a grin and awaited

developments. They came in a shower of nickels. Then it was that José reaped his reward, for Peter, looking on those nickels as his due, refused to allow anyone, even André, to touch them, so I, laughing immoderately, was forced to climb down and, gathering up the coins, throw them into José's ancient tin. He lifted up his voice in his old song of thanksgiving for blessings received which we had heard so seldom of late, and together Peter and I bowed our acknowledgments to the delighted passengers. Maria made one more trial, more in a fury of thwarted rage than in a belief of her success, and once again Peter sang to her. Now opposition she could stand and love it, but derision no native will bear, so at the third burst of merriment, feeling she was no longer the centre of interest, however abused, but an object for laughter, she dashed her accordion at José's head and fled, mocked and taunted, a figure of ridicule with her large army gathered together against a blind old man, a small boy and a dog, never to dare to lift up her head again to beg, knowing she would be a byword for some years to come.

I started, or someone started, 'For he's a jolly good fellow,' and they all joined in the song though they did not know the words.

The tears rolled down old José's face; he stood up and sang in his old worn voice, choked with emotion, and the listeners, with the ready susceptibility of the Latins, impressionable alike to mirth and sorrow, bared their heads as they heard. And so we moved on, while faintly, from behind, the droning words pursued :

'Give your tithes to the poor and needy,
Give for the love of Christ;
Protect the dying and the seedy,
By the sacred blood of Christ.'

BETTY WOOD.

THE NEW GUINEAN GOLDFIELDS.

THE STORY OF A GREAT DISCOVERY THAT WAS
KEPT SECRET.

THE sensational gold discoveries in New Guinea, or Papua, as the world's largest island is variously called, seem likely to develop into a second Klondyke, and to-day the adventurous from all ends of the earth are converging upon its mysterious shores. The call of virgin gold is irresistible and sounds more imperatively than that of any bugle in the ears of those whose nature is attuned to hear it, and soon the answering hordes of frenzied gold-rushers will sweep away the last remaining mist clouds that still linger over the least known part of the British Empire.

It is now more than half a century since Admiral Moresby hoisted the British flag on New Guinean soil and made the huge tract of unknown land not already held by the Dutch, British. Part of the country was lost later when, during a period in which the home ideas regarding foreign possessions were not what they were before—nor have been since—we allowed Germany to annex the north-eastern portion of the island without opposition. Indeed, Britain would have lost all her New Guinean territory then had not the sturdy young colony of Queensland, acting independently, practically re-annexed the south-eastern side. The original British possession is again British under the mandate of Australia, and the new goldfields lie in the tract taken back from Germany, but the fact that that part of the island was ever held by Germany is the reason why the knowledge of the enormous auriferous deposits on the headwaters of the Markham and Bulolo Rivers was not given to the world before the Great War broke out.

New Guinea is still a *terra incognita* to all but the prospectors and the few pioneering companies who are clearing its most easily accessible parts for rubber-growing and other purposes. Its evil reputation has been a means of retarding its development; it was a land of deadly fever swamps, irritating insect and other pests, impenetrable forests, and ferocious cannibals. But these little troubles did not daunt the prospector, and, trusting to quinine for health, a rifle for protection, and his luck for fortune, he penetrated

to the utmost mountain ranges of the interior, and there are now but few gullies in their fastnesses in which he has not 'chipped' reefs, or 'panned' gold from the stream beds. And he carried the White Man's Burden in very tangible form. The laws of the country—notwithstanding all that is said to the contrary by some people at home—were designed to give the native every advantage in his dealing with the white man, being based on recognition of the fact that New Guinea belonged to him. If a part be dangerous because of the hostility of the natives, the white man must keep away from it or take all risks, and it is no excuse for him to shoot, even if attacked, if he is in country where he should not be. The German boundary was a line the prospector was forbidden to cross, but as the disregarding of that order entailed no harm to anyone but himself—he would be shot as a filibuster by the Germans, if caught—he did not find that law particularly irksome, owing, perhaps, to the knowledge that no gold had ever been found by the Germans on their own side.

Until recently, the discovery of gold in any hitherto unexplored part did not occasion much comment. The news spread quickly enough amongst the miners on the settled fields and, by some mysterious means of native transmission, reached the prospecting parties in the most distant mountain gorges. In time, those who were discontented with their luck where they happened to be would gravitate towards the scene of the new find, and thence, on again, later, when news of the next discovery percolated to the last camp. The authorities preferred this means of working, always deprecating a rush anywhere, as any large movement of men with the gold hunger would likely lead to trouble with the natives. The experienced New Guinean prospector seldom gave reasons for any native unpleasantness, but, unfortunately, invariably after the sensational reports of some new discovery had reached the cities of Australia and elsewhere there was an influx of men fired with the desire for sudden fortune and not caring much how they got it. The new-comers knew nothing of the strange native Tapoo laws and seldom took any pains to observe them when they found themselves up against them. A rising was sometimes the result, and one of them, that which culminated in the Mambare massacre, will not readily be forgotten.

But conditions in New Guinea are now changing; the fevers now exist only on the coastal fringe, the forests consist of valuable timbers which when cleared off leave land upon which any tropical

produce can be grown, and the one-time fierce cannibalistic savages are becoming amenable to reason. They are now—except in the ex-German territory, where they were not treated as human beings by their late masters—well under the control of the Australian Commonwealth Government's administration, and prospecting parties composed of men who know their ways can—with discretion—become even friendly with some of the most notorious head-hunting tribes.

We, a party of six white men and a dozen half-civilised coastal native carrier 'boys,' had become very friendly with the people of a village lying on a high plateau between a spur of the Owen Stanleys and the Albert Victoria ranges. Another range closed in the valley on the east, and mighty peaks of still another distant mountain chain pierced the sky in the only open space in the north. We did not know the name of the last, nor indeed did we know much of our position beyond that we were on the great central divide, that Mt. Chapman lay behind us, that unexplored country lay ahead right up to the Sepik River, where the Pygmies had their home, and that the forbidden and unattractive German land flanked us on our right. We had reached our present position by following the Mambare River from the goldfields town of Tamata (named after Chalmers the missionary) into the eastern ranges, thence north through mountain passes well known to prospectors. We were looking for osmiridium, that mineral being specially attractive as it was worth £40 per ounce, while the gold of the mountains was not usually valued at more than 70s. We intended, if we located the deposits the natives had told us existed in the sands of a very big river farther north, to leave our rifles and other gear and return to report by Morobi on the German coast. One of our members, the Professor, had a butterfly-collecting and orchid-seeking permit from the German authorities, and he was honestly interested in such things—at times!

Meanwhile we were waiting in the village, at the invitation of the Chief, to be present at an elaborate ceremony in connection with the marriage of the Chief's son to a daughter of some powerful Chief whose domain lay over the eastern hills. A deputation of his priests and warriors had already arrived with the dowry.

The celebrations duly came off and were highly spectacular. We were intensely interested, being, probably, the first white men to witness a real savage ceremony of its nature, stage-managed by

genuine Tapoo priests, carried through by actual cannibals in their own stronghold, and uninfluenced by any laws other than their own, which, according to themselves, were handed down from their ancestors from a time when the New Guinean peaks were all that stood above water in the Southern Hemisphere (they knew nothing about South America). Much of the proceedings may not be described, but the sight of two hundred warriors and their women-folk, dressed in masks and six-foot head-dresses, going through a dance which lasted till morning, when half a dozen survivors had disabled all the others, was something that did not allow of boredom. Mac and Big Sam were among the survivors !

That awful battle, or dance, will probably not be recorded in history, but it should certainly have a place in the world's stories of gold discoveries, for it was that dance which led to the first finding of the present sensational New Guinean fields. Each performer wore on his or her person the entire wealth and heirlooms of the family he or she represented, and while some were adorned with pierced shell necklets and wristlets built up of hundreds of spondylic shells and mounted with pearls, others also wore strings of gold nuggets round their necks. The shell adornments were *Soulavas* and *Mwalis*, tokens of wealth in the western Pacific Islands, and indicated that our friends had at one time some connection with the sea or had traded with other islanders. The Professor and the Inventor Fellow knew as much as any white men about those treasured symbols, but, as we had not found any evidence of the presence of gold in the vicinity, we wondered where and how they had got the nuggets. Of course, the treasures displayed might not have any connection with the time they were being used, such ornamentations being shown only on special occasions and hidden, in lieu of being banked, until some great event necessitated their production.

When the festivities were over and arrangements put in hand for the necessary return visit to the important lady's people, we prepared to depart, and, while giving presents of tins of jam, condensed milk, tinned salmon and pickles, told the Chief and some of the leading warriors that they possessed wealth enough in their gold nuggets to buy almost anything should they ever visit a white man's village.

'We are not now strong enough to fight the peoples between us and the sea,' the Chief answered, in effect, 'and as we have broken their Tapoos (sacred laws) we can never be friends.'

'The way of the transgressor is hard,' murmured Mac; but the Chief, not knowing English, only laughed and went on to explain that the yellow metal was not valued by his people and that only the white Chiefs of the *other* white fellow's warriors ever gave them anything for it. It did not take us long to understand that the 'white Chiefs of the *other* white fellow's warriors' were the officers of the German boundary patrol, and we thought that if they came inside British territory for gold we could return the compliment if inducement offered. And the Chief's conversation soon made us think that there was such inducement.

'There is no gold in this valley,' he told us, in his own language, 'but over those hills in the big river there is much. My warriors are going over to the village of my friend there with presents for my son's father-in-law, and if you want gold I will send word to him by my warriors that you are my friends. . . .'

Thus it happened that next day when the party returning the ceremonial call set forth we were with them. We wanted to see the river which held so much gold, and we knew that other prospecting parties who, with us, had heard native stories of golden sands before leaving Tamata would find their way thither by other routes; the only difference between them and us being that they would have to find that river for themselves whereas we were about to be led to it. Of course, we did not believe that we should find gold in much more profusion than was the case on the Mambare, the Kumusi, the Ope and other known rivers, but, as the mysterious river was only three days' journey in some direction from where we were, we thought we might as well prove the matter one way or another.

To our surprise the happy band of priests and warriors headed straight for the flanking wall of mountains on the east, and, in single file, we followed a native pad which wound and twisted in a foliage-roofed tunnel through the dense dark forest entanglements, along precipitous ledges, over tree bridges, and, at times, through gorges lined with overhanging growths that seemed to float on air. Brilliantly plumaged birds of paradise and noisy members of the parrot family flitted among the branches overhead, and occasionally a wild pig would cross the track and invariably be speared and carried along for commissariat purposes. In the timbered country, mosquitoes, jigger fleas, and winged pests of ferocious appetite found the blood of the white man very much to their liking, but the native bees, diminutive creatures like common flies, fastened on our perspiring skins in clusters and sucked salt with a craving that

surely was unnatural. We thought we were used to the little discomforts of life in New Guinea, but we had never before kept pace with hurrying savages and, previously, our journeyings had been up or down river courses where a current of air was always in motion. Still, we caused no delay, but we were thankful that we carried nothing but our rifles and wondered how our poor carriers, who were not accustomed to strenuous travelling, were faring in the rear.

We knew we were rising during the first part of the day, but, as we could only see the sun at rare intervals, beyond the knowledge that we were cutting *through* a mountain range, we had but little idea of the direction of our route, and, when the deeper gloom of our surroundings indicated the approach of sundown, we felt that there couldn't be much left of New Guinea to cross—if we were crossing. About this time Mac began to sing, and, to escape hearing his musical attempt at telling of 'the bonnie banks' of a certain freshwater lake in Scotland and of how the singer would be there first, Silent Ted and the Inventor Fellow accelerated their pace and, passing a string of athletic warriors carrying presents on their heads, forced up to the leaders. They were greeted with grunts of admiring approval as they took up position about half a dozen places behind the first man, but, as they soon found that those in front relieved each other in bursting through the enormous spider webs that blocked the pad every hundred feet or so, and thus practically opened the trail, they realised that they had been indiscreetly venturesome. And they could still hear Mac singing!

The Inventor Fellow duly relieved a wiry little fighting priest at the actual front, and after bursting a way through half a dozen webs, which seemed more like fish-nets, he applied the talents which had given him his name among his fellows and set a lighted match to the next obstacle. The result surprised even himself! The insect trap disappeared in a blaze and Mac stopped singing, but the gummy leaves of the bushy undergrowths also caught fire, and the human procession was instantly between two walls of flames which crackled like a battery of machine-guns in action. The warriors laughed and applauded, but the white men said uncomplimentary things after the fiery zone was passed and they learned its cause. Shortly after, the track opened into a rocky gully, and presently a halt was called where its mouth yawned into space. We were looking down into a timber-clad valley through which, in the distance, a river, which gleamed in the setting sun like molten gold, followed a curving course we knew not whither.

We worked out our position that night while the warriors were sleeping around us.

'That is the Markham River,' said the Professor (he really was a Professor) as the scene ahead showed out in the moonlight, its vastness making it a panorama, which we could only view, in sections, by changing our own point of vision. 'It seems to flow round the northern end of this range, and must cut through that far-away line of mountains which cannot be far from the eastern seacoast.'

'Morobi, the big German wireless station, must lie on the other side of that range,' said Mac, 'and Rabaul, the German capital, should lie somewhere through that gap towards our left in that other smaller line of peaks.'

No one spoke for a minute. All were thinking the same thing.

'Well, we're doing no harm to anyone,' Sydney Charlie drawled in the sleepy tones which cheated so many people at times. 'I reckon we didn't see any trespass notices hanging on any trees, and we didn't cross any fence.'

The Professor spread out a German map on the ground. 'The line runs along the top of the range we are standing on,' he said quietly. 'I calculate we crossed into German territory this afternoon—'

'Forget it, old man,' laughed Big Sam. 'We are only the guests of a British Chief returning a call. Surely the natives have visiting rights on both sides of the border?'

'But the Germans will not listen to argument if they see our white skins,' the Professor persisted.

'We'll come back peaceably when we get some gold,' put in the Inventor Fellow reassuringly. 'We needn't go on to any German settlement.'

'How's this?' sounded the voice of Silent Ted, and we all started. When Ted spoke his words were always worth attention. He had been squeezing the seeds of some bean-like pods in his hands while we were talking.

'Out with it, Ted!' cried Mac. 'You are always talking, we know, but we'll excuse you if you drop a chunk or two of wisdom in your next torrent of eloquence.'

Ted rubbed his face with his hands without answering, and in the firelight his unshaven cheeks shone out like sheets of polished copper. We all watched interestedly.

'That's the idea!' exclaimed the Professor. 'Darken that

tint with coffee-bean stain and the shade will be that of a mountain savage.'

'We'd better tell our friends first,' cautioned the thoughtful Mac. 'They might not know us in the morning, and if they awoke with healthy appetites it might be awkward for us.'

But rousing sleeping Papuan warriors was equal to asking for trouble, and we decided to wait till morning before making any changes in the colour of our skins, and when we fell asleep that night our thoughts were of what would happen should we fall in with any German officials.

Away from the coast there was nothing but officials in the land of the Kaiser, and they were all soldiers in charge of more or less trained natives. The chances of meeting any in such an unknown country were small, but we could not afford to take any risks. Perhaps, too, the tales of gold were just native stories, and our filibustering trip would only result in the discovery of some new orchids or butterflies! At any rate we slept, and in the morning, by some mysterious means, our thoughts had undergone a change and we were eager to push forward. We gave our skins a first coat of Silent Ted's dye, however, and the natives thought our appearances were greatly improved thereby!

That day's march was less hurried. We learned that the warriors had been afraid of ghosts the previous day, and we were a bit sorry we hadn't seen any. After descending some miles through densely timbered and trackless country we struck a creek, and our route now led down its bank. Forcing a passage, we in time reached flat, swampy ground, and here leeches of a most persistent and ferocious type drank deeply of our blood. Before night we were in a land which reminded us of the Herberton district of North Queensland, only that the stinging trees and the ubiquitous clinger known there as the 'lawyer vine' were more virulent and attentive in their actions. We camped on the big river that evening, half an hour ahead of sundown, and estimated that we had covered sixty miles since leaving the village on the British side and were now only about the same distance from Morobi on the German coast. But the dark wall of mountains lay between us and the latter, and no track lay through them that our natives knew except by the long river route round, which was also unknown to them.

'The village we are going to is less than half a day from here,' the leader of the warriors told us as he and the little priest sat with

us and ate pickles that night. We had already named those two Pick-hims-bones and Fruit Salts, respectively, and both responded to their cognomens.

'We are delighted,' Mac answered, as nearly as possible; 'but we should be even more pleased to know where the gold nuggets came from.'

'Heavy yellow stuff everywhere in little creeks around,' was the surprising reply. 'Our friends in village and ourselves have taken away all the big bits, but plenty more small stuff left in sands and plenty more big bits if you dig.'

'That's straight talk, anyhow!' commented Big Sam, in English. 'I'm needing some exercise, so I think I'll just go over to that creek and dig a bit by moonlight.'

'I reckon I'm needing exercise of the same kind, myself,' said Sydney Charlie, and it appeared that all except the Professor had the same inclination; the last named was writing up his diary by the light of the fire. 'Look out for the crocodiles,' was all he said, not troubling to look round. Silent Ted opened another bottle of pickles and, dividing the contents into two empty jam tins, gave Pick-hims-bones and Fruit Salts something to dream over in our absence. Our carriers were surprised when we roused them to procure shovels and washing-pans, but they went to sleep again when they realised that we were only going into the water beside them. They were terrified at the thought of being left alone near the other natives.

But to us the scent of gold was in the air and we cared for nothing else. We walked to a patch of sand at the junction of the creek and river, and soon Big Sam had turned over a shovelful.

'This doesn't look like gold-carrying sand,' he said.

'You didn't expect to see sovereigns, did you?' grunted Mac, flinging his gold-pan at a crocodile that scurried from a recess in the bank.

The Inventor Fellow said something anent mosquitoes. He had stripped, and one coat of vegetable dye was only an insult to the proboscis of a festive German New Guinean mosquito. Sydney Charlie said nothing, and Silent Ted was true to his title. The shovels plied, the pans were filled with sand from the lowest strata—coarse water-worn grit on a bed of rock about eighteen inches down—and presently each man was giving his vessel the peculiar concentric jerk that his experience had taught him was best for effecting a separation of sand and gold.

'Well, I'll be——!' sounded a soft voice, as one man held up his pan to the moonlight.

'Don't swear, Charlie,' reproved Mac. 'The niggers will think you're praying and copy your language——'

'I've got about two weights (pennyweights) in my pan!' cried the Inventor Fellow.

'You needn't shout; you're not the first,' said Big Sam. 'I've got at least three.'

'Nap!' ejaculated Silent Ted, standing up with something in his hand. 'I've got an ounce specimen!'

All rushed over to Ted. His specimen was a piece of quartz, heavily impregnated with gold, and its presence showed that the gold in the sands must have originated from some reef not far away. . . .

'Gentlemen, you have made history!' the Professor remarked that night as all lay on their blankets and smoked—and studied the stars—and had visions of London, Sydney, Glasgow and other places! And, generally, were delirious!

But, finally, they slept.

Perhaps the gods watched over them. Perhaps! . . .

Next morning the reaction had come. No one wanted any breakfast, and all wanted to set about building a stronghold. All also filled their rifle magazines.

'We had better not delay the start any longer,' the Professor remarked some time in the forenoon. 'Time is now of importance to us.'

'Yes, let's get started to divert the water in the creek to the other side of the channel,' said the Inventor Fellow. 'We can then rig up a sluice box with bark and——'

'I was referring to the delay we are causing the natives,' interrupted the man of learning. 'The gold here will not run away, and, not being on British territory, we can gain nothing by pegging out claims. Besides, it may be very much to our future advantage if we can become friends of the people living nearest.'

Mac and the Inventor Fellow grumbled a bit about paying ceremonial calls on German New Guinean savages, but knowing that the natives did not understand neutrality and that we must be either friends or enemies, and were lucky in having a chance of being the former, we presently crossed the big river and headed for the village without more discussion, and arrived outside its stockades in the afternoon. It was only about ten miles distant. We had

now put on a second wash of stain and were passable in native appearance except for our hair and garb. We were received with due honour, the Chief and priests showing no surprise when Fruit Salts explained that the six trousered men were not originally black-skinned. The village lay on the bank of the same big river, but we had cut off a long bend by following the native track straight across. It was the largest village we had ever seen in New Guinea and contained fully a thousand warriors. The Chief and some priests had a slight knowledge of the German tongue, and one, the chief 'sorcerer' of the tribe, even knew a few English swear words he had somehow acquired on the coast.

We were given a large mat-walled guest house to ourselves, and in the two days that followed made ourselves very popular on account of our knowledge of the properties of soap, when taken internally, in curing a common native complaint after a feast! Knowing most of the Tapoo laws and not being qualified to be warriors, we were given the honorary rank of priests, and when we donned coconut fibre kilts, wooden face-masks and enormous feathered head-dresses we certainly looked good specimens of the fraternity. Our own native friends were staying in the village for some time, and while a period of feasting was being arranged we, with the knowledge of the Chief and some others, slipped away and followed our own tracks back to the sands of gold, our own carriers and a few villagers accompanying us.

We worked all night in the creek we had first tried and, even in the light of a waning moon, recovered a total of about fifty ounces of coarse gold before morning.

We spent the following day testing the sands of several other smaller tributary streams of the big river near, and in all cases found 'good' gold. How far the auriferous area extended we could not determine, nor could we see any signs of reefs from which the alluvial gold had been shed, although its quartz nature was an indication that the mother lodes could not be very far away. But we were not exactly pioneers opening up new mineral fields for the good of our own country, and knowing that the creek we had followed down from near the British boundary held more gold than we could hope to be able to take away before our presence became known, we returned to it and, while the others washed out gold with their pans, the Inventor Fellow constructed a weird contrivance after the nature of a 'cradle' with sheets of bark.

We found the nude state very convenient while working in the

warm water, but each man tied a native kilt round his waist in the late afternoon when the mosquitoes became very active, and we wore our boots when on shore to protect us as much as possible from snakes, most extraordinary leeches—and other things. We found also that we could dispense with our helmets, as the trees on the banks sheltered us from the sun. By the end of three days we had cleaned up about 800 ounces of gold from the 'cradle,' though, owing to its being attached to particles of quartz, it was rather poor, worth, we calculated, only about 50s. per ounce. Some of our carriers now began to assist us while not attending to the requirements of our larder and, to our surprise, a number of natives from the village came over with Fruit Salts and the Sorcerer to watch us and pick up the air of the songs we sang occasionally while working. They were all very friendly disposed, and during casual conversation told us of how they hated the white men who thought they were their masters, of how some of them, with an army of black warriors from the coast who carried guns, sometimes came to the village by way of the big river, of their keen desire to get any gold the villagers possessed and their ignorance of where to find it for themselves. They also told us in all seriousness that ghosts sometimes attacked those people in the forest, and this last item of information explained to us the presence of some German officers' uniforms and effects we had seen in the village Tapoo house! Probably the ghosts had eaten the Germans and kept their adornments for Tapoo trophies. The natives knew we were some *other* kind of white men who lived beyond the great mountains, but also vaguely understood that we were not friends with *their* white oppressors and had allied ourselves with their own friends of the valley back over the summit against them. We left the imaginative Fruit Salts to give all further information!

A few more days passed and we were anxious to get back out of the danger zone with our gold, which, having no better carrying means, we were now packing into the tied legs of our discarded trousers. One morning a tall native came over to where we were working and silently sat down on the edge of the cradle.

'Get off!' Mac yelled, in English, or rather in the vernacular he sometimes used when well pleased. 'Dae ye no' ken that thing bites?'

The native slid off and sat on the ground, and Mac went on, humorously, telling him of the glories of Scotland and the virtues of its people. The victim listened attentively, sometimes laughing

as if fully understanding. In some indescribable way he seemed different from the other natives ; his hair was not the same, and he sported a ring in his nose instead of the peg which most affected.

'Ye seem to be a vera sensible fellow,' Mac said abruptly in the middle of his discourse. 'Ye havena said a word yet, an'——'

'Got any tobacco, Mac ?' broke in the warrior.

All swung round in unbounded amazement.

'Who spoke ?' asked Big Sam. 'Or am I getting the sun ?'

'No, old man, you are only suffering from the delusion that you fellows are the only white natives in this part of the world,' answered the ring-nosed man before anyone else could speak. 'I am an *American* Papuan myself, but my three mates over on the next river are British specimens like yourselves.'

'We are very pleased to make your acquaintance,' began the Professor, but the Inventor Fellow cut him off with a shout of delight, and grasped the American by the hand.

'You are the Doctor !' he cried. 'We were in the same party over on the Mambare.'

'We were,' laughed the American, 'and it was the sight of this cradle affair that made me suspect you fellows were frauds like myself. I knew there could be only one Inventor Fellow in Papua, German or British, and I recognised his work. . . .'

The 'Doctor,' who was a prospector well known around Tamata, told us that several parties had come over into German territory, but whether all had struck the golden valley or not was beyond his knowledge. 'At any rate,' he said, 'there's enough gold in this place to make a fool of Klondyke, and we've got to keep the fact secret after we get out or else cause international complications.'

All agreed with him and, soon after, went up the river with him, crossed, and then, struggling through dense bush for about a mile, came to another large river. Here we found three black-faced prospectors, whom we knew by reputation, preparing a meal. We shared that meal and, after discussion, they came back with us to our camp, natives who had accompanied us carrying their gold and belongings. We thought it better to be together.

We shovelled the sands through the bark separator for another few days, amassing more gold, but one afternoon thought we had been trapped when four stalwart white men suddenly appeared on the bank beside us. The Doctor replaced the spring-bone ring on his nose and went over to see if continued pretence would be of

any use, but before he reached the men a yell of delight from one made us all rush shorewards.

'Mac!' one giant of a man had cried, 'I would spot you anywhere by that old trick of yours.' (Mac had a habit of rubbing his right leg when thinking.)

'Big Tassie!' we shouted, and felt supremely happy; the giant had been one of ourselves on previous trips. The Professor said something about German New Guinea becoming a popular resort for notorious characters, but no one heeded him and all talked at once. The new men were still another party who had crossed from British territory, but they were not aware that they had yet done so. Their carriers had deserted them a week before, and they were making for Morobi as harmless orchid-hunters, to sail back to Samarai. They had struck our tracks and had known they were following white men.

But our camp was now unwieldy, and in a day or two dissension arose. Some of the newest arrivals thought the Germans were not bad fellows, and the Doctor's three comrades felt the fever coming on. Morobi might be reached by crossing the sky-piercing range ahead in a couple of days, but the nearest British settlement was at least a fortnight distant, and fever-stricken men would never reach it. Finally, the two other parties—excepting the American and Big Tassie—decided to cut straight through to Morobi, openly, and as honestly as possible, with the intention of hiding their gold if they found they could not get past the German Station there. They duly set out one morning, and eight determined men continued to shovel sand. Incidentally, those men observed when their friends were leaving that the dye did not easily come off white skins, but, notwithstanding, Big Tassie became a native too!

At length we had won as much quartz gold as we could remove readily. We might have effected a higher value by some process of concentration and thus rendered transportation a simpler problem, but we had no time for experiments. Therefore, when Fruit Salts and Pick-hims-bones came out from the village one day and told us that their men were ready to return to their own village, we prepared to go with them and, packing up everything as best we could, ready for the return journey, we went into the village to say good-bye to the Chief and his leading men. And that afternoon despair for the first time seized us. During preparations for a dance that night in our honour, a native rushed in from somewhere and announced that a German Patrol was approaching. The Chief was troubled, but he at once gave the order to sound the

War Drum ! ' I will allow them to come in,' he said grimly, ' and there will be a big feast to-morrow ! '

We were very tired, but we thought our only chance of escape lay in immediate flight. It seemed evident that our Morobi-bound friends had been caught and that only speed would save us. While we were still talking a couple of coastal native soldiers approached the stockade, and in German military style formally announced that Captain —— would have the honour of calling on the Chief of the village before sundown. Inquiry revealed that the Germans were coming up the river, and that fact told us that they could not have encountered our friends, as they had gone across country. The knowledge was reassuring, and probably the same idea came to us all simultaneously.

' On with the dance ! ' said the Professor to the Chief when the soldiers had departed. ' But no feast to-morrow. We shall help you to do honour to the soldiers of the German Emperor. . . . '

Thus it was that when the well-disciplined force under two white officers and six smartly uniformed white soldiers entered the village that evening they were received with elaborate ceremony as befitted the occasion. But they did not dream that eight of the most awe-inspiring priests who performed strange evolutions in their honour had borrowed their huge wooden, hideously painted masks and ceremonial garments from the mighty dead preserved in the Tapoo house and that their skins would scrub nearly white ! Those eight priests were defenceless, for their rifles were hidden, but at a signal from them Fruit Salts and the Sorcerer would bang the War Drum and then—— !

The Germans passed on, unsuspectingly, next day, well pleased with the impression they thought they had made. The Professor, who knew German, gathered while they were questioning the Chief that they were looking for white filibusters and expected to return with them on their way back to Rabaul in a week. We allowed them the day to get round the river bend and past our camp, and when night came started out in the intense darkness with our boys and Pick-hims-bones and his warriors over the short native track which cut out the bend. Moving silently and carefully, we reached our own crossing-place, but could not tell in the darkness whether the patrol had passed or not. In all probability they were camped very near, but as we judged they had not seen our old camp we were not anxious to find them, although Pick-hims-bones and Fruit Salts had not the same objections. We collected our heavy trousers in absolute silence but with some trouble, as we could not

see what we were lifting and, certainly, we left behind some items besides our tools, which we no longer required.

When midnight was indicated by the stars we were well up the creek in the leech swamps, and when morning dawned we had traversed the bush country. But we did not stop. We expected the Germans would follow the river round to the boundary, but were not taking the risk of being overtaken should they happen to hit our tracks. We reached the high gorge entrance at nightfall, where, dead beat, we slept till well on in the next forenoon. We camped that night in the home of the great spiders in the ghost mountain forest on the British side of the boundary, and next day marched into the village we had left just three weeks before. Another fortnight saw us down on the Mambare, and in a settlement of our fellow-countrymen we got soap, scrubbed our skins nearly white, cut our hair, and donned trousers. We did not tell where we had been and continued our journey to the coast as soon as possible, and thence to Australia.

Our gold made some sensation in Sydney, and for good reasons we separated in that city. Most of us met again on the opal fields of Queensland, where we could recuperate free from unwanted attentions. While there the Great War broke out. We all did our duty. . . .

But we did not go back to the valley of gold when the ending of the war made the country British—some had gone on a longer Trail. The natives in the mandated country had become hostile when free from military restraint and prospecting was prohibited. This condition lasted until those in authority were no longer able to keep back the gold-seekers who now knew the secret of the mountain valley. Their numbers were many. When the territory was recently 'declared' open some of our old friends who had secretly gone in *via* Morobi pegged out all the ground they could hold for themselves and old friends and then gave the news to the world by openly landing in Sydney, direct from the fields, with suitcases packed with gold. The writer, who, of course, is one of the characters in the story here told, has had several adventures since he left New Guinea and is now considered more or less respectable and law-abiding. But to-day the Call of Gold sings so alluringly within him that he would willingly break all laws and burst all bonds to be back shovelling sand on the Markham River. Perhaps the gods will smile again.

ROBERT M. MACDONALD.

THE STAGE OF MIRTH.

[TO A. F. M.]

I.

NOBBY CLARK had come to buy the 'fit-up.' He had answered the young widow's advertisement: 'Punch and Judy Proscenium on light, good legs, frame and cloth, all in good condition. Hand-painted back-cloth, strong box containing set of puppets, well carved heads, and clean, good costumes. Drums, pipes, pair of good wheels, etc., etc.'

Mrs. Rawlinson had met Nobby once before, and he reminded her of the fact.

'You remember that day, mum, years ago, when old Joe—we always called your departed Old Joe in the profession: artist he was, one of the old school; never carried his "voice" amongst his bag of tricks: got it natural in his throat, he had—can't you recollect a Friday, in June it was, some five or six years ago, when we both arrived, simultaneously, as it were, in the market-place of Hitchin?'

Mrs. Rawlinson shook her head, though by her knit brows it was evident she was trying to recall the incident. But there had been so many of them on the road that she had travelled with him whom Mr. Nobby Clark called 'her departed.'

'Well, it was like this: two Punch and Judy shows in one market-place was a hopeless proposition, so to speak. I was only the assistant then, picking up the game, as you might say. I was with Joe Bryant—you remember the Bryants?'

Yes, Mrs. Rawlinson had some recollection of the Bryants.

'In course you have; why, their family has been in the profession, generations of them,' and Mr. Nobby Clark went on to explain how he and his mate had discussed the situation and had magnanimously decided that Joe Rawlinson, as an old man, should have the right to the town and they would push on to the next one.

'You will excuse me mentioning it, mum, and in all due deference to yourself, but your departed was a good few years older than you——?'

'Yes, yes, still for all that——' Mrs. Rawlinson wanted to tell the stranger that, though Joe had been old enough to be her father, she had loved him beyond the power of words to explain, and was

still mourning his loss, and all she now wanted on earth was to live in the spirit of his presence which associated itself with the old 'fit-up.' But her voice died away in the choking of a sob, not unnoticed by Mr. Nobby Clark, who, to cover up the distress of the lady with whom he was about to do business, said :

'Well, the upshot of it was we adjourned to a near house of call and ordered a drop of "Dog-nose" all round. Gin and bitter mixed, mum, very pleasant drink, too, on a damp morning before work, and we left old Joe and his young wife, asking your pardon, to both the market-place and the town. Well—well—in our profession we are gentlemen if we are nothing else,' and Nobby slapped his chest to enforce the remark.

Mrs. Rawlinson bowed her head in acknowledgment of the truth of this observation, and said : 'So many kindnesses were done to me and my dear Joe on the road that I only wish I could remember this one,' and a tear trickled down her cheek. Rather than watch its companion chase down the other cheek, Mr. Nobby Clark turned to examine the proscenium tilted on its legs and stretching across the end of the room it occupied and so embarrassed—for a Punch and Judy show *is* an embarrassing piece of furniture in any room, and more especially in the one occupied by Mrs. Rawlinson—a room in a side-street, calling itself in Maida Vale, and abutting on the tow-path of the Grand Regent Canal—a room of small dimensions that looked on to a backyard and contained a bed as well as the rest of the widow's household furniture.

II.

During this conversation there had been a listener, a listener as lachrymose as the widow : a small dog with large and somewhat bulging eyes, which from weakness, or from the condition in which it found the world, or, as with its mistress, from grief at the loss of its master, were always watering. The dog had the habit of keeping his eyes half shut, which gave him a pained and pathetic look. When Joe had brought him as a puppy he had been small enough to ride home in his coat pocket.

'Here's a Toby dog for us, Maggie dear,' he had said. 'Ain't he a little lump of intelligence ? Wait till he grows up big and fine, you'll see.'

The dog had grown up, and there was no doubt about his intelligence, but the 'big and fine' which Joe had prophesied had been a miscalculation on the old man's part, for the dog only grew to

about twice the size he had been when he was carried home in his master's pocket. Black and tan was his colouring, a very light tan, and now, as age threatened, a tan that had grown lighter still. There were white hairs about the muzzle, there was a shortcoat that shone like silk, a compact and well-modelled body, and thin legs—indeed the bones could not have been much stouter than whalebone—legs that as they trotted worked so fast that one could only see the movement, not the legs. 'His feet don't run—they twinkles along,' old Joe would point out in admiration. Amongst his other idiosyncrasies was the habit of sitting up and shivering without the least cause or provocation; Toby could shiver on the warmest day or in front of the hottest fire; without excitement, he shivered at will. 'Nerves, that's what it be, Maggie,' Joe had explained. 'All great artists shiver at times; I do myself when I happen to do an extra good show, only no one sees me under the covering. It's the art in him working of itself out; or else he is thinking what a place this world is and what an abject lot of blighters there be in it. There's a lot in that dog I can't, and never shall, fathom.'

A dog of parts this if not of any named breed, not a cur, certainly. 'Kind of high-class breed of his own—ain't you, Toby?' That was how old Joe would explain things.

The dog had sat up on the entrance of Mr. Nobby Clark, aroused himself from his slumbers on the soft cushion placed on the up-turned drum, the drum he had followed, the drum which had been his bed since, as his master said, he had joined the profession. He had neither barked nor whined, he had simply shivered, and he continued to shiver the while congealed tears hung at the corners of his eyes.

It was a hard parting, this saying good-bye to the 'fit-up' which Mrs. Rawlinson, like the dog, had followed for so many happy days, the drum she had banged upon, the pipes she had shrilly blown after old Joe had disappeared under the blue check covering of the legs of his stage. Two years had passed, desolate but not lonely years, for living with, and from her bed staring at, the 'fit up,' Joe's presence still seemed to permeate the room which during the worst winter months had always made a home for them in which to look forward to and talk about the sunny days to come, when they would be on the road again with Toby's feet twinkling along the path in front.

But the nest-egg Joe had left was fast disappearing, and no

longer could the widow enjoy the luxury of living 'midst the accessories of the profession which, next to her and the dog, Joe had treasured above all else; the little back-scene of street and houses that every winter he repainted. No longer could she spend her time remembering him who had passed over, now she must go out and earn her living. The ten pounds she was asking for the 'fit-up' would be the last egg to be laid in Joe's nest.

'Yes, the wheels—ball-bearing—are in the yard; better step out and look at them. The show fits them; it wheels it along easy and as light as a feather.'

'They are proper and run true,' was Mr. Nobby Clark's opinion when he returned from the inspection. 'Well, now, missus, I'm not going to bargain and knock your price about,' he was now examining the Punch, the hangman, and the little gibbet, Judy, the ghost, and the beadle, with an air of reverence rather than criticism, for had they not belonged to old Joe Rawlinson, a master of the profession, who, unlike himself, required no mechanical aid in his mouth to produce 'the voice'? Besides, as the widow had advertised, the characters of the show were in perfect condition, they were antique, all the more valuable for that, and had passed through far more competent hands than those of Mr. Nobby Clark, who, though he was in the profession (had not his uncle played at Buckingham Palace in the early days of King Edward's reign—an honour not even old Joe had been vouchsafed?), was still young in it and therefore boasted nothing of what he knew a 'fit-up' should be. 'I am willing to give you your price, mum; Nobby ain't one to haggle, especially with a widow.' Here his eyes searched the girl's face as if he were looking for some recognition of his uprightness other than the silent tears that were coursing down her cheeks. Finding none, he added: 'Fact is, with the little dawg thrown in—and he goes along with the show, in course—the price you ask is not out of the way—not to an honest bloke like Nobby.'

'Oh, no—the dog is not in the bargain; I could not part with him.'

'But you advertised the whole fit-up. What's a fit-up without the Toby dog?'

'He is not mentioned in the advertisement—like the characters and other things.'

'But he is among the etcetera and etcetera.'

Mrs. Rawlinson shook her head. 'He is the last living link between Joe and me. No, no.'

The dog had by now descended from the drum and was smelling round the man's legs, and at this moment of refusal stood up on his hind legs and put his front paws on Mr. Nobby Clark's knee.

'Why, there, mum, look at him—he want to go along with the rest of the fit-up!'

Mrs. Rawlinson picked up the dog and held him tight to her breast as if to make sure that there should be no whisking away of her pet. As far as she knew him from the short interview, she liked Nobby Clark; he appeared a comparatively young man, some twenty-eight years or so, and honest. Still, on so short an acquaintance one had to be careful, though she felt herself wrong in this precaution, for was he not at the moment counting out the ten pounds and placing them one by one in a row on the table?

'Won't you lend him to me, say, just for a few weeks? I shall be working round this neighbourhood for a bit before I take off on the road. I would bring him back every night, honour bright, if you would.'

The widow smiled a watery smile and shook her head. 'I don't doubt your word, but I can't,—I can't.' She snuggled the dog's head against her cheek.

'It would be very obliging of you if you would, mum. Give me time to pick up another little dawg—difficult job—or get hold of a young 'un I could train. I'm in want of both a mate for the show and a dawg. Both hard to find, I assure you.' Nobby gave such a beseeching look at the woman that for a moment she hesitated in her mind.

'I can't—I would, I assure you, I would—I promised my Joe I would never part with Toby. Next to me,' she said, with pride in her voice, 'he thought all the world of him.'

Mr. Nobby Clark inadvertently, so it seemed, ran his lips over the pipes, ending in the shrill crescendo of the Punch and Judy man's note. The effect was magical. The dog kicked, struggled, did his best to disengage himself from his mistress's hold. He gave forth a long wail which ended in barking yelps.

'He's an artist, he is; that's like the footlights going up to an actor what knows his job,' and Nobby was about to repeat the notes when Mrs. Rawlinson bade him desist. If the pipes had driven Toby into an ecstasy of excitement, the shrill tones had equally upset her nerves and she had to sit down, with Toby secure on her lap, whilst the man with difficulty moved the show down the passage to the front door. When he had garnered the rest of the

paraphernalia and placed all on the wheels, hat in hand he came to wish her farewell.

'I wish you the best of luck,' she exclaimed, and by the tone of her voice Nobby knew that she meant what she said. From the door she watched him wheel away that stage of mirth, the canvas pulsating in the breeze as he went, and the dog still struggling in her arms, trying to follow his bed—the drum.

III.

The stage of mirth, that is what old Rawlinson called the show. In those five years of married life of his with the young girl he had tried to imbue her with his rough ideas of the purport of the play.

'It makes the little kiddies laugh, and I love to hear them. But of course, Maggie, I've not been playing up and down the country all these many years of my life without knowing that it's not all buffoonery and fun that is in the drama. There is some hidden meaning in it all that I have tried to fathom.'

Once when he was wheeling the 'fit-up' along the road he had said. 'One of my opinions is—of course, Mag, I've no education except what I've picked up in the profession, though that's an education in itself—my idea is that the play is not all laughing matter and the tricks of Mr. Punch. Seems to me as I have figured it out that the show is a tragedy placed before us. I would like you to remember this so as when I am dead and gone you can understand something of life.'

That was the one cloud in Maggie Rawlinson's five happy years, old Joe's oft warnings that she might soon find herself alone in the world, and she would glance up at his clean-shaven face with apprehension—that rusty old top hat, the long tight-fitting black coat he wore, all depicted age, the gap of years between them, and she would clutch at his arm: 'You make me wish I was an old woman by your side, Joe, so that we could die together on the road somewhere.'

'No, no, child; there will be plenty of life for you later on. I only want you to understand as I understand—this is something of it: Punch ain't a representation of a human being at all. Why has he got the voice we give him? It ain't meant for a human voice, it's as near as we get, if he is to be understandable, to something else—'

'Do you mean the devil?'

'No. I figure it out that he stands for the world itself—the world as gives us hard knocks, same as he deals out, to rich and poor alike. Even to those in authority and office. See how he batters the beadle, the parson, even the hangman—serves them all alike—Mr. Punch to me is just the figurehead or the personification of this world. 'Tis only one of my ideas, Mag, and quite wrong, I daresay, only it makes things sort of knowledgeable to me about life.'

'You mean it's no use complaining—crying about it?'

'That is summut of it, Mag; life is to get on with till we get into a better one. And what of the showman? 'That's me,' Joe added with pride. 'What's my job? Nothing more than to show the world from my little stage how to laugh and put up with the hard knocks Mr. Punch deals out to us all. That's the only way, Maggie dear, to laugh at the hard knocks and so get on with it. See, dearie?'

Mrs. Rawlinson had seen; she was seeing it now when the stage of mirth no longer half filled her room. It was difficult to laugh without Joe to encourage and brighten her up, as he always did when persistent rain drove audiences away for weeks together, by his funny sayings, his Mr. Punch's voice; for like all showmen he could not help introducing his show into private life. Or he would amuse her by teaching the Toby dog to do tricks: the dog that had so soon wormed itself into their lives and became part of them, as is the manner of dogs.

Once, when pulled up on the road between two distant towns and seated as was their wont for a bite of victuals, they had discussed the dog and owned to themselves how in some subtle way he had mastered them instead of their mastering him. 'You spoil him, Joe, that's what it is. If he for some reason don't want to give a show you can't make him, and you shove off to the next pitch. Artful he is,' said Maggie.

'I know, my dear; but when I have insisted what have I found? That it's a mangy sort of town with an unappreciative audience come round me and not a stiver in the hat. Toby seems to know, he does; kind of sixth sense he has—he can tell the sort that will see the show and drift away just before it is time for you to collect.'

'But tell me, Joe,' she once asked, 'for you never have, what's the Toby dog got to do with the show anyway? He never does anything, might as well not be there.'

'Ah, now you have me, dearie. There is no history at all why

the dog is there. I have asked the question of real educated men that in my wanderings I've run up against. One particularly educated gent I come across, who knew all there was to know about the old show, he told me all about Pulcinello, the Italian hump-backed buffoon, who was supposed to have made the part right back in the Middle Ages. "Some even say," were his words, "as the original play was a religious play, like some of the religious plays as are still left us. But what the dog is supposed to represent no one knows, Rawlinson; but in these very old religious plays there always was an animal—a bull or a cow—trained to stand by and look on just as your Toby has been trained to sit there on the O P side and look on. True, he growls and snaps at Mr. Punch in one act, but that has probably been worked in."

They were sitting on the greensward of a dusty road, the show on its wheels drawn up close under the hedge. Old Joe's mind was running on his 'profession,' for he went on: 'I, too, have my ideas, Mag. I figure it out in my old noddle that Toby is put there to take in all that is going on on this stage of ours and make an unbiased record of it. You see, if God had put an angel there, or a spirit, or one of the great saints, they, knowing the poor tools of humans we are, would be biased in our favour and might not put down a true record of what goes on on the world's stage, so to speak. So there's an animal, a sort of neutral, as looks on. Something that just records, automatic-like, without being able to say it was your or my fault or the why and wherefore of things. We have in England our Toby dog, in France sometimes they have a cat, one time in Italy they had a pig—it don't matter what's the looker-on; whatever animal it is it sees most of the game. And don't our Toby look on!—haven't you noticed him? Always that face of contempt for the doings of my dolls, and yet, let me bungle the rope for Jack Ketch, as I know I do at times when the rheumatism is in my finger and thumb, he gives me a glance that pulls me together quick. Don't you, Toby?' and Joe ran his hand lovingly over the dog's satiny coat. 'You know when I'm not putting my heart into the work, eh? Maybe our conscience is the imaginary Toby that looks on.'

He stayed from petting the dog and let his hand rest lovingly on his head. 'You must understand, Maggie, that the dog can see me, the influence at work on the puppets which represent you and me in the drama of life. Perhaps some influence in the drama of ordinary life is recorded too. Let's hope so.'

IV.

There had been drama in Maggie's life ; her marriage with old Joe had been dramatic in its rapidity. The first act of the play took place one windy April day along the Bath road. Joe was alone at the time, trundling the show along on its wheels, for his mate was laid up with bronchitis way back down the road, and would have to return to London by train. Behind him Joe heard hurried footsteps, sometimes walking, sometimes running ; the afternoon was late, the road dry and hard in the spring wind ; as far as the road stretched no one was in sight. Joe paused and looked round, and behind him was a young woman, fair of hair, light of frame, a girl under twenty, he took her for, a girl of less than medium height, a fairy of a girl, he thought as he glanced at her.

'Hullo, what's up—what's frightening you ?' he asked when the girl reached him.

She was for going on, but the solicitude in the showman's face stayed her steps. After he had promised to protect her she told her story the while she fell into his paces. Her name was Maggie Ross, and her history was one full of ups and downs ; picked up as a waif and stray, with no friends save the Institution that had reared her and placed her out into the world, she had been a servant, more frequently down than up ; indeed she was now running away from some farmhouse, for the farmer's wife had accused her of stealing and had sent for the police to search her box. She had not stolen anything, she assured old Joe, and from the manner of her he believed her, but she was so frightened of the coming of the police that she had fled, and never again would she go back to be a drudge—suspecting people threatening her with gaol—no, she would do anything rather than continue that life.

'But what are you going to do—where are you going ?'

She did not know—she had not thought ; she had been running and walking since early morn ; it had taken her some hours to get to the high-road ; out in the depths of the country her place had been.

'Fall in with me, then, my gal, till we get to the next town, and then I will see what can be done about you,' was Joe's recommendation, and so they jogged along for ten miles, Joe staying to do a show in one or two of the villages by the way, the girl waiting by the drum. In a moment of inspiration she had taken round the hat whilst Joe, unaware of the action, was still under the cloth.

'Well, I never,' he exclaimed when, hot and tired, he emerged before the crowd melted as crowds have the habit of doing; 'two and a tanner! That didn't look like ninepence when I popped out. That's capital; we will try another pitch—it's a long street of a village,' and they did.

So it was as if Maggie fell into the business: 'Dropped like a ripe plum into my mouth,' so Joe described the action. And the upshot of it was that like father and daughter (which folk took them to be) they jogged along for weeks till they neared the great city when Joe began talking to himself or asking questions of the pup he had bought and which lay curled on the drum placed between the wheels. Questions as to what he was to do with the girl, such a teeny tot of a girl, not big enough to take care of herself; but the season was over, and he could not take her back to his one room. All very well their life on the road, where he could get her a bed at an inn and turn in anywhere himself, but London was different.

The girl's face showed she was thinking of the coming parting. Then one day—they had pulled off into a little wood for rest—he said: 'Tis wrong, I know, for I am getting on, but—but could you marry me, Mag, and be an old man's darling?' There seemed to be nothing else to suggest.

Maggie could, and she had been that old man's darling. God knows she had never regretted it: the freedom, the out-of-door life, the show and dear old Joe, the little room in winter, with enough to live on and a bit to put by, for Punch and Judy is still a lucrative trade, if precarious, and Joe had some savings for old age. All the same, he was worried during those golden autumnal days of his life. Once when sitting under an oak-tree, eating the mid-day bread and bacon, an acorn had fallen with a plop on to the road and then another and another. He had looked up into the branches tossing in the breeze against the blue sky, and he had seen more acorns standing 'midst their leaves in the little cups of their birth, soon to fall, too. He had mused: 'What a gay life they have had all through the summer, but they are ripe now—it do seem a shame, don't it? For they are still green and plump, just at the best of their lives, so to speak;' and he picked up one and showed it to the girl, pointing out the cream-coloured butt, where it had rested in the cup. 'That's life all over; how often when folks are happiest, same as I have been since I have had you, dearie, or when the success a man has waited for for years and years at last comes, why, then comes the change, too, and you fall out of your cup, as you may call

it, to the ground. That's what I'm so frightened about, Mag, you and me, and I am getting ripe and my cup is so full of happiness.'

It was far too dreadful a conversation to join in, and all Maggie did was to nestle under Joe's thick overcoat as she sometimes did when it rained, Toby dog on one side, she on the other. Fear caught her; the day was no longer blue to her. She had to listen as he spoke of his savings: just a hundred pounds he had put by, and then there was the 'fit-up'—she was to sell that. 'But don't part with the little dog—keep him. Promise.'

She promised.

It was strange how that pup had ingratiated himself into the affections of Joe and his wife. Joe had had Toby dogs before, several, but none like this who, as he grew, forced his presence, his very wishes, on the two of them. It was the dog who, when the old man was tired and having a snooze, would move them on their way for the afternoon performance; he would scratch at his master's feet and then assume that prayerful attitude of his: paws stretched out flat on the ground, head between them, and then, if unheeded, would roll over on his back, paws crooked and held up and a look of supplication in his eyes. 'He's a glutton for work, Mag; that's the art in him. We've got to move on.'

For Joe had reasoned it out that the dog knew that he wanted to add to his nest egg whilst there was yet time. He had been taught to go round the crowd on his hind legs in his motley, as Joe termed the frill, ~~hat~~ in mouth, collecting. Few could resist the appeal. Joe would laugh: 'I know, as you say, Mag, he is all for Master and all that, but he's thinking of you as well, my girl.'

And when, as the ripe acorn, Joe at last fell to earth, his dying recommendation to his young wife was never to part with the dog. 'Seem to me he is clever enough to guide your footsteps in the right direction when I am gone. He will want to have his way with you, no doubt, but 'twill be a wise way, for he is a wise dog.'

V.

Toby appeared to be quite as much affected by the blank space in the room where the 'fit-up' had stood as was his mistress. All day long he sat dejected and shivering on the cushion which no longer rested on the drum. Maggie tried nursing him in her lap, tried to comfort him, without avail, for Toby would not be comforted, and struggled till she put him down to return to his cushion

on the floor. 'A lot of help you are to me in my sorrow,' she told him in her despair.

The next morning came the strains of the pipe and drum in some not far off street. In a flash the dog vanished. Maggie remembered that Mr. Nobby Clark had said he was going to work the neighbourhood for a few days. Fearful, she ran out of the house after the dog, ran up one street, down another, but it was some time before she located the one where the show stood, a small crowd about it, with the old familiar squeak of Mr. Punch coming from the proscenium, and on it, to her astonishment, sat Toby, his frill round his neck and as of yore a look of boredom on his face. It might have been, so familiar did it all look, those happy days returned. If only Joe had been under the check cloth manipulating the characters instead of Mr. Nobby Clark!

He was not as adept as Joe had been, Maggie could see that at a glance; still he was not putting up such a bad performance. She must tell him that when the dog growled and snapped at Mr. Punch's nose he must rub it on the stage—it always got a laugh. There were several little mannerisms of old Joe's of which she must tell Mr. Nobby Clark; Maggie had not been five years looking at one of the professors of the trade for nothing. Would he like to know or would he think it impertinence on her part? Still, what had it to do with her? She had come after her dog; Toby must return with her as soon as the performance was over and the attendant had collected the pence.

'If you please, I will have my dog,' she said as Nobby, hot and red of face, came from between the legs to the air.

Nobby was apologetic. 'Well, just as I was setting up he came running under the cloth, mum, asking to be put on the stage, and I couldn't refuse his Nibs. He's an artist, he is, if ever there was one, worth a fiver to any show. If I thought you'd take it, I'd give it to you willing, but I know you won't, so,' sympathetically, 'I shan't pain you by offering, well—well, in our profession we *are* gentlemen. Neither would I like to add one more pain to your young heart, that's Nobby, I assure you. But what's to be done about it? I shall be playing all round Maida Vale for several days; his Nibs'll find me out, I'll warrant on it. Or else he might get lost or run over, or picked up and nabbed.'

Maggie stared blankly into space. She knew the dog; how he would have his way—always. 'I can tie him up,' came at last from her.

'Tie him up !' the indignity to such an actor appalled the man. 'Look here, why not let him work with me just while I'm in the North-West of London ? I'll bring him back and fetch him every morning. You can trust me, can't you ?'

'Oh, yes, of course ;' there was really no need to say that, and it came to the woman that it would be company to look forward to, Mr. Nobby Clark returning with the dog. Should she suggest that he might stay and have a little supper with her ? That would be company, too ; more company than the discontented Toby was now. They could talk about old Joe, and perhaps she could give Mr. Nobby a hint or two as to how he could improve the show. With some faltering she thanked him and suggested the supper.

'Well, now, that would be kind, only I don't like taking it from you. Tell you what—I'll bring the sausages if you'll fry them and provide the mash potatoes. Sausage and mash, and a glass of stout is *the*,' he emphasised the word, 'is *the* proper supper for a showman.'

The compact sealed, the show now on its wheels, Mr. Nobby Clark bade the widow good morning and, followed by the little dog, he and his mate moved off.

VI.

Those little suppers of 'sausage and mash' made pleasant breaks in young Mrs. Rawlinson's life. Nobby was so bright, one might say cheery ; he seemed to bring back the old life on the road, yes, he was the profession, something quite different from the ordinary ruck that now crossed Maggie's path. At times he could make her laugh. Toby, too, was no longer bored—pleased to come home at night, anxious to go out to work in the morning, he sat by the door and sniffed under it till it was time for him to start.

But then came near the date when Mr. Nobby had arranged to be on the road. It was May ; for long he had spoken of touring the provinces ; 'I shall take the Bath road next week,' he announced.

'Poor Toby,' was all Mrs. Rawlinson said, though at once she was aware that she, too, was to be pitied. 'I also must seek work,' she added with a sigh.

'And what kind of work have you in your mind's eye, if I may be so bold as to ask ?' Nobby inquired.

The lamplight fell on the girl's white face and touched her hair. That frail little figure in its dress of unrelieved black did not look

like much hard work—not alone. For the first time in his life Mr. Nobby Clark felt the warm blood flow through his veins; he found himself thinking: ‘You should have bought the whole fit-up as it stood, girl, dog, and all’; he found himself picturing the sunny day, the open road, the girl, the dog, and he pushing the old show along.

Nobby waited for the answer to his question. ‘I don’t know,’ said Maggie; ‘selling flowers in the street, perhaps—Joe was always so fond of flowers——’

‘Joe!’ Nobby knew he was always up against old Joe. First the dog, now the girl. However, he would have a dart—try his luck. ‘I don’t think much of that proposition—Covent Garden four in the morning, the kerbside the rest of the day. Look here, I want a mate—I want a Toby dog—most of all I want a wife—I mean I want you, I love you—if I could take the whole fit-up——’

Maggie stood up, cutting short all else he was about to say. ‘Thank you—thank you very much, but I loved old Joe, you see. No, I couldn’t,’ and then she sat down again and went on in a low voice: ‘I like you, but you will understand that to marry without love would not be right.’

‘Of course it wouldn’t—you are more than right there, and Nobby Clark is not the one to ask you to do it. Only I don’t like leaving you, my feelings being what they are.’ A long pause followed. Suddenly the man’s face brightened. ‘What about this now? As I said, I want a mate for the show and I want a Toby dog. Forget the other. I knew I hadn’t a chance, but come along as you are.’

‘I don’t understand your meaning; I——’

‘You didn’t marry Joe—not at first, did you?’

‘No, not for two months——’

‘Found it quite all right, didn’t you?’

‘Of course I did.’ There was heat in her voice at being asked such a question. Her Joe!

‘So you would if you came along with me. In our profession we are gentlemen’—and Nobby again slapped his chest to enforce the remark. ‘You have your wedding ring; to the world you can be Mrs. Nobby Clark, to me you will be Mrs. Rawlinson, my mate in the old show; you will take your share out of the collection as well as the dog’s. Now I can’t say fairer than that, can I? And look you here, I’m not going to pester you with my love—no, you need

not be fearful of that—half a loaf is better than no bread, and to be in your company is all I can expect. I promise never to mention the subject to you again; but if ever you do alter your mind, just come and put your little hand in mine—then I'll tell you what you are to me. That's all I have got to say about it.'

Maggie bent her head. The offer was given by an honest man—she knew that—a gentleman in the profession, the same as old Joe had been. But was it fair to him? Of course it was not. Her eyes came to rest on Toby, who in the middle of the room was now sitting up and shivering as he always did when he was ready to start on the road. 'He'll want to have his way, no doubt, but it's a wise way': that was what old Joe had said with almost his last breath.

'I'll take you at your word. I'll come—I thank you——'

'Capital! and I hope, Mrs. Rawlinson, you'll never repent it,' broke in a delighted Nobby. Then, as the tension seemed more than he could bear, he exclaimed: 'Let's go out to have a glass of port to wet the bargain. It's the night for wine, not beer or stout; I feel I want something with a full orchestra in it.'

They went, and Toby with them.

VII.

Three months later found them down on the Bath road, nearing the city. They had drawn up close to a river, for the day was hot, and Nobby, ever solicitous, had insisted that Mrs. Rawlinson should rest before they entered the town. So far they had had a most successful tour; Punch and Judy was not played out yet, even from the hands of so young an exponent as Nobby.

They had enjoyed a bite of food and some cold tea out of a can and now lay back to rest on the dry, dusty grass. What a chance life was! The woman closed her eyes and in her mind went over hers. Picked off the road, a waif and stray, an interlude of the Institution, Punch and Judy and old Joe and back on the road again—drama and tragedy mixed, so Joe had called his show, and so he had called her life. Then sorrow—two years of it—and once more on the road, once more in the profession, the same stage, the same 'fit-up'—and Mr. Nobby Clark. Dear Nobby! how hungrily he looked at her sometimes—gentleman he was, true to his word; she was beginning to wish he wasn't quite so true—really she had grown quite fond of Nobby. Fond! when she knew it was love—

a young love—she only wished he knew it, it would make it so much easier for her if he did—him and his Mrs. Rawlinson——!

Was not life like a lucky dip? You plunged in your hand and you might or might not get a prize—or you *might* get two—whilst the Toby dog looks complacently on. You must plunge in your hand. ‘I’ve got to put my hand in his, that’s what he told me; till I do he won’t say a word I’d like to hear,’ she told herself. Slowly she drew her hand from beneath the old black shawl she had worn in Joe’s day, hesitated, then made up her mind; but at that moment the dog came and scratched at Nobby’s boot and, as was his habit, turned over on his back with that beseeching look.

‘He’s a real glutton for work—artist, he is, wanting to take us on to the next pitch; and we’ve got to go, do as his Nibs wants us, eh, Mrs. Rawlinson?’ Nobby was about to rise when Maggie, crimson of face—and the colour was not altogether due to the sun—said:

‘Nobby, give me your hand. I—I—I want to put mine in it.’

Then, as he turned over on his side, the hungry look she had so often seen came into his eyes. ‘Maggie!’ He sat up and stretched forth his arm. . . .

For once those solicitations, that prayerful attitude, that rolling over on his back in the dust of the Toby dog, remained unheeded. Nobby and the dog’s mistress sat on, talking of their marriage when they should reach the city, and it was over an hour before he could get them on the road, trundling along the stage of mirth.

CHARLES FIELDING MARSH.

*A HUNTER AND HUNTING EXPERIENCES
IN RHODESIA.*

BY H. R. CUMMING.

II.

FOR years I saw nothing of Kanamusa, and then, to my surprise, I heard that he was at Gwemelo, in serious trouble with the law. He, the wily one, had been caught red-handed in his camp with the hide and meat of a large eland, which, as he had no licence to shoot big game, was as serious an offence as poaching at one time in England. The police had suspected him for years, and tried all the ways they knew to catch him, but hitherto he had always managed to outwit them. Consequently, they were full of glee that at last they had got the better of him. But they laughed too soon. Kanamusa had not served for three years in Paul Kruger's Border Police in vain. He had spent his time learning to sharpen his wits against the slimmest and most skilful hunters of the day.

The case was black against him. For besides the eland hide in his camp the police had found a fine lion skin stretched out to dry. He was hauled in to Gwemelo to stand his trial for pursuing and destroying royal game without a licence. Several witnesses for the prosecution swore to finding not only the drying meat but the skin which was produced in court, with the hole through which a shot had reached the eland's heart. In face of these damaging facts Kanamusa could produce no licence. He pleaded 'Not guilty.'

On this the magistrate asked him if he could call any witness for the defence, or say anything in his own favour.

'Yes,' he replied, 'I should like to call my boy Bookie, who was with me when I shot the lion.'

Bookie, on being placed in the witness-box, swore that he was following his master through the bush, when suddenly, in an open space, he saw a large lion spring on to the shoulders of an eland, catch it by the nose with one paw, and press the shoulder over with the other, breaking the eland's neck in the act. As the body rolled over, the lion jumped clear, and, at the same moment, was shot dead by his master, the bullet penetrating the eland as well. To bear out this story, told with many graphic touches, Bookie

pointed out the claw marks of the lion on the skin of the eland. But if they had been carefully examined it would have been discovered that they had been made, not by a lion, but by a pocket-knife skilfully used. Kanamusa also swore to the truth of Bookie's evidence, which the magistrate, who knew nothing of the Boer and his ways, accepted.

As the examination was a preliminary one, the case had to be sent up to the High Court in Salisbury, and had it been decided otherwise might ultimately have had to go before a judge and jury. The Attorney-General proved to be as simple as the magistrate, and the wily Boer was discharged, greatly to the chagrin of the police and the amusement of the town. For by this time details of the racy story had leaked out, and were generally known.

Years again elapsed before I saw anything of Kanamusa. I was told he had taken part in Van der Venter's campaign in German East Africa, as a scout and a spy, dangerous service for which his training, experience, and temperament fitted him. He and the faithful Bookie, who followed his baas, were highly valued by the Intelligence Department of the British Forces operating in the Colony. Though they had many narrow shaves from death, which would not have come in mercy to them, they escaped scot-free, their daring and resource enabling them to save situations which would have proved fatal to less experienced and intrepid children of the veldt. When the campaign ended they went on a long hunting trip, mainly for elephants. That they were poaching mattered nothing to them, only adding to their zest, knowing themselves too clever to be caught. In this way Kanamusa had collected a considerable amount of ivory, which he was fortunate enough to sell when the market price was at its highest. Bookie, too, had saved a snug sum, which he entrusted to his master's care for future use.

They appeared on my farm one day in a fine new waggon drawn by a span of picked donkeys. At the time I was feeling that I should like a holiday, and could think of no better way to spend it than in hunting. Morby, a neighbour of mine, who had just recovered from a serious illness, wanted a change too, and happened to see Kanamusa arrive. In the evening he came over full of an idea the circumstance had suggested to him.

'I say, old man,' he said, 'why couldn't you get Kanamusa to take us out for a few days after the buffaloes?'

'When there aren't any nearer than the Zambesi!'

'Ah, but Kanamusa has a little preserve of his own away to the west from here. He knows I'm safe, and I know that you are. Otherwise, I shouldn't tell you. Whenever he wants plenty of reims, horns, and biltong, he goes over this preserve, shooting a few of the herd and leaving the rest to increase for several years without disturbing them.'

'But what about the natives?'

'Oh, he has warned them that if ever they give away the secret to any other white man he will kill them, and they are too scared of him to betray him, however high the reward.'

'Well?' I said.

'Just this. He thinks so much of you that if you propose a shoot in this preserve he may agree to it. Of course the thing will have to be worked tactfully.'

A grunt from me.

'As if you haven't wanted to have a go at the buffaloes for ages. The wonderful collection of horns you've got isn't complete yet.'

'I'll try,' I said.

Not that I was prepared to risk a snub on Kanamusa's good opinion of me. But I had discovered that one of the traits in his character was his aversion from being beholden to anybody. It was irksome to him, I was sure, that he owed his life to me, though it was a matter entirely between ourselves, and he knew that I thought nothing about it. If he agreed to take Morby and me shooting over his private preserve, he would argue that he was doing me a good turn, which would square his debt to me. Again I guessed that the buffalo was the only animal that Kanamusa hunted without perfect confidence. He was once tossed by a bull, which would have tossed him again, only that his father was present, and cut short the career of the angry bull with a bullet in the nick of time. He might, therefore, welcome our company in a buffalo hunt on his own ground.

It fell out as I thought it would, and so we arranged to start the following week. We took four 'salted' horses, as it was useless trying to hunt on foot, and eight good donkeys to draw our waggon, which for extra comfort I provided with a tarpaulin. As we should require a central camp in which to collect the meat and skins, not to speak of the heads of the buffaloes we shot, the donkeys could carry our kit on their backs in the hunting field.

Mrs. Morby rode with us on Whistler, her horse, for several hours. On the way back she had something of an adventure.

Hearing a jackal bark more than once in the same place, she wondered what had disturbed him. Riding cautiously towards the sound, she saw a large dog—or so it seemed to her—standing over a reitbuk. Struck by something unusual in the scene, commonplace as it looked, she thought she would watch what happened. Through the bush in which she had sought cover, she soon saw she had mistaken a lion for a dog. The jackal ran up to the lion, barking, when he turned round and looked at the jackal, growling. The jackal then scuttled away with every sign of fear. This performance went on for several minutes, the lion growing more and more angry. As Mrs. Morby carried only a shot-gun, she began to think it was high time she went about her own business.

Fortunately, she had kept the gun, which was loaded with G.S.G., at the ready. For while she was laying it on Whistler's head to continue her ride home, the jackal had evidently run nearer the lion than it had hitherto dared, and he had leapt towards his tormentor and missed. It turned swiftly to escape, running towards Mrs. Morby, the lion following. But so intent on his quarry was he that he was almost on her before she grasped what had happened. In her excitement, she took a snapshot at his head, wounding him. He dropped in the very act of springing on the jackal, which soon disappeared.

Mrs. Morby was off her horse in a moment, elated at the idea of having shot her first lion. It was, in fact, the first lion she had seen on the veldt alive. She found that he was not dead. The charge had only blinded him, several of the pellets having penetrated his eyes. So she killed him with a shot through the head.

She discovered, too, how it was that even at a distance she had come to mistake him for a dog. He was gaunt to emaciation. The cause was a porcupine quill which had pierced his jaw, spearing his tongue, so that, though he had been able to kill the reitbuk, he was unable to devour it, and was, naturally, starving to death. She pulled out the quill, round which was a festering wound; otherwise, it would have been more difficult to extract than it proved to be. While she was struggling with it she reflected that she might, like Androcles in the fable, have made a lion her grateful slave for life. The wretched jackal, by exasperating him with its antics, had cheated her of a great experience.

She was further disappointed that, owing to his condition, his skin was almost worthless. If she could have put it on Whistler's back she would have taken it home as a trophy. But her mare, though she did not mind carrying a small buck occasionally,

especially when she had helped to run it down, as a rule firmly refused, even for love, to allow herself to be transformed into a pack-horse. It was the one thing she and her mistress disagreed about. She would not carry a lion's skin certainly.

Mrs. Morby might have sent for it, but as she was many miles from home it was not worth the trouble. In the circumstances she was forced to leave it behind. Unfortunately she forgot to carry away a single proof that she had ever fallen in with such an adventure—not even the tip of the lion's tail. Therefore ever afterwards she was chaffed about shooting a poor mangy lion which could not get away and was in such a plight that even a jackal dared to worry him.

After Mrs. Morby left us we continued on our way to Kanamusa's buffalo preserve, travelling west for four days without an incident of moment. On the fifth day we struck the Lupani River, where we found the fresh spoor of a cow and a large bull.

We had a meal, and then, as we were short of meat, decided to go on foot. Kanamusa took the lead. Suddenly two buffaloes broke cover about a hundred yards ahead of him, standing broad-side on, in an open glade. He put up his rifle and fired.

'Verdom! I have missed,' he cried, as there was no sound of a hit and the bullet went singing away, while the bull galloped off in the direction we were going. 'We'll never see him again.'

We walked on for another half-mile, when from some tall grass fifty yards in front of us the bull rushed madly out, and charged for Kanamusa, who was still in the lead. Again he put up his rifle, and again failed of his aim. Reloading, he pulled the trigger for the third time, with the result that there was another missfire. A cold shiver went down my back at Kanamusa's danger before an infuriated buffalo bearing straight down upon him. It was a terrible moment. Then my presence of mind came back to me, and I fired at the same instant as Morby, striking the bull when it was only ten paces from the hunter. My shot penetrated the brain between its eyes, his behind the ear. It was going at such a rate that it rolled over at Kanamusa's feet.

'My God, you have saved my life again,' he cried, 'or he would have had me, sure! I'll never forget it.'

We were all three white and trembling. It was a half-minute charged with primitive emotion.

On regaining his composure, Kanamusa examined his rifle. He found that the striking pin was broken. It had snapped when he pulled the trigger the first time, and the sound of it in our ears

drowned the soft thud of the striking bullet. For when the buffalo was skinned it was found that he had been wounded, but too high above the heart to kill him. We saw nothing more of the cow.

Two days later we were in Kanamusa's preserve, where we spent a pleasant three weeks hunting buffaloes. His recent experience having made him more careful, he kept Bookie beside him with a spare gun in case of accident. In all we shot thirty buffaloes, and by the time we had skinned and cut them all up we had as much as our waggons could carry of biltong, heads and hides. But it was over the harvest of reims that Kanamusa gloated. Our share—all we wanted—consisted of two of the finest pairs of heads, and two spans of the best buffalo reims and strops. At making these the hunter was an expert. To crown his luck, on the return journey we ran into a couple of giraffe. Morby brought down the bull. Out of the hide Kanamusa made many more whips, and its marrow-bones Morby claimed as a present for his wife.

On the following night a curious incident occurred, which though amusing to us was a painful experience to one of the natives. We had arrived after sunset at the only water-hole in a dry stretch of twenty miles. Without noticing it we had camped and made our beds on the track of a rhinoceros to the water. When the fact struck us we were so tired that we decided to take the risk and remain where we were. The boys, if no less observant than ourselves, were less phlegmatic. So, instead of going to sleep as they should have done, they were all on the *qui vive*. Nothing happened in the early part of the night. But towards dawn, between sleeping and waking, I was conscious that something was disturbing the horses and donkeys. They were all straining at their reins.

Suddenly I awoke, grabbing my rifle, and saw Kanamusa get on his hands and knees. Three of the boys were standing at the ready with their assegais. A rhinoceros had passed quietly by.

'Kuzeni ? Kuzeni ?' (What is it ?) they shouted.

When we were thus keyed up to a sense of danger we heard a scurry under one of the waggons, and the cook boy, Sixpence, dashed up to Kanamusa, who was still on his hands and knees, and crept under him like a frightened chicken trying to get under its mother's wing. The hunter was so taken aback that he squealed like a pig. When he understood that it was only a boy and not a rhinoceros, which had startled him, he was so furious that he started to thump Sixpence in the back with his fists, and the more he thumped the more Sixpence, thinking the rhinoceros was after him, snuggled under the hunter's broad chest. Even by starlight the

scene was so ludicrous that we roared with laughter. Kanamusa, his vanity hurt, sprang to his feet and sent the boy flying.

But the night's comedy of a passing rhinoceros was not yet played out. For when things should have settled down in the camp the boys kept crying: 'Wethiki, wethiki!' (Come down!).

Following the direction of their eyes, I soon grasped what had happened. I should explain that near one of the waggon's rose an ant-heap crowned by a large thorn tree. Burnt down to the roots in many a grass fire, it had sent out a growth of fine twigs and thorns so close that a mouse could hardly have climbed up its trunk. It was as dense and dangerous to negotiate as a barbed-wire entanglement. Apparently, when one of the boys from Northern Rhodesia saw the rhinoceros he fled for safety to this tree. Goaded by fear, he had forced his way, stark naked as he was, through the mass of thorns to the top. It was to him the boys were calling in the darkness to come down. But he had gone up like a madman. He could not be expected to make the descent in cold blood, and until night waned nothing could be done to help him. So he had to wait in his place of pain until dawn.

As its glow stole softly into the eastern sky, it threw the man's figure into fearful relief. He was covered with blood from head to foot, the thorns during his passage of torture having torn and lacerated his flesh almost into ribbons. He could hardly speak from exhaustion. His plight was comic, but it was also tragic, since he must have borne a martyrdom of suffering.

There was no way of releasing him except by hacking a path through the thorn bush, which cost us hours of hard work. When we finally got him out he was more dead than alive. But like his kind he had a tough skin as well as a tough constitution. So his wounds soon healed, and he suffered little from shock. The only permanent effect of his terrible experience which might have troubled him was æsthetic. He looked more like a zebra than a human being. The incident shows to what desperate lengths a native will go when he is driven by extreme fear.

My wife and I once had a curious experience when we were travelling by car from our farm to Gwemelo.

Emerging from a range of kopjes, we saw ahead of us what I took for a lion stalking a duiker. When we got closer he proved to be a large leopard, which, seeing the car, started. I thought he would bound into the bush at what to him should have been a strange sight. Instead, he continued his crouching stalk, evidently taking the car for a new kind of big buck. As we watched, he drew steadily nearer.

'By Jove!' I cried to my wife, 'he is after us. Now we are in for it.'

'Then let us get closer,' said she, not a bit perturbed, 'and see what he will do. I'll have the shot-gun ready.'

I may say that it was loaded only with No. 5 shot.

I slowed down the car to a crawl until it was within two paces of the still deluded leopard. I could see him working his hindquarters in the way a cat does when it is preparing to spring. But although my wife was a fair shot, I didn't think she was good enough to risk drawing any closer with no better protection than No. 5 shot. So I sounded the motor horn several times sharply. The leopard bounded back, as if he had suddenly become conscious of his ludicrous mistake, and for the first time in my veldt experience I could laugh at the expression in a leopard's face.

'I haven't been stalking a living buck,' it as much as said, 'but a strange moving box, which hunters now use instead of a good horse!' It was genuinely funny, surprise struggling with disgust and baffled hope for a good supper. He turned tail, and crept sheepishly into the scrub.

It was about the time for the early rains to begin when a large lion came poaching near Glen Arroch where I lived. The first to suffer was a settler who had been wintering his cattle in the district, and had not yet moved them all to his farm near Gwemelo. He had taken the usual precautions against the marauder, for his outpost kraal was built of heavy mapani logs, laid between upright forked logs, one on top of the other, and was nearly six feet high. Nevertheless the lion leapt over it one night, killed a fine Africander cow, which he threw over his shoulder, and leapt back again, prey and all. He then carried it for a mile and a half across country before he thought it worth his while to set down his feast.

Next day the boys at the cattle kraal reported to me what had happened, and I went with them to look for the spoor of the lion, and, if possible, to get a shot at him. We traced him to the scene of the kill. Unfortunately I could see nothing but the bones of the cow.

Two nights later, three of my own cattle were missing, owing to the carelessness of the boys. In the morning Morby and I went with a search party, and found all three killed, two eaten, and of the other nothing was left but the hindquarters. This I ordered the boys to poison, and the following night the bait was duly eaten by the lion.

'If we follow his spoor to the water,' I said, 'we are sure to find him. He'll be lying dead beside it.'

But I reckoned without my lion. We found his spoor by the

water right enough, but he was not there. It was clear that he had taken the poisoned meat, because the mud showed deep paw marks where he had tramped up and down to drink in the agonies of thirst—one of the effects of the poison. But it had not killed him, only caused him intense discomfort, which must have been passing. We followed the spoor for two miles, which took us into thick bush growing round some kopjes. There we gave up the search, as it would have been dangerous to proceed farther in such country.

Early in the following week his lionship was back again, this time to a cattle post which, owing to the scare, had been greatly strengthened by beating it up with branches of isinaga, a tough hook-thorn tree, which made it impenetrable to any living thing larger than a mouse. This formidable fence was raised to a height of ten feet. It was, however, no obstacle to the lion, which cleared it at a bound. He killed a three-year-old heifer, throwing it over his shoulder, and, burdened as he was, leaping back again as he had done with the cow over the six-foot fence. The heifer he ate in the bush fifty yards from the kraal.

Next morning the boys told me the story, but it seemed as incredible to me as it did to Morby when he joined me later and heard the details. For by this time, I should explain, the alarm had been sounded all through the district. We rode over to the post forthwith in order to investigate the matter for ourselves. Sure enough, the spoor of the lion, which I knew must be larger than any I had ever seen, led from the fence to the kill, where nothing was left of the heifer but the head and bones. Then, in the lion's leap either into or out of the kraal, a thorn had torn a piece out of his fur, which we found.

We needed no further confirmation of the boys' story. I got the boys to cut out the tongue from the head of the heifer which the lion had eaten, to poison it, and to hang it on a low thorn bush close to the kill. 'We can't let this lion defy us indefinitely,' said Morby. 'Even if he doesn't nab one of the boys—which is as likely as not—he'll scare them until they refuse to go out with the cattle at all. Let us come up here and watch what happens to-night.'

I agreed, and that evening we walked over to the cattle kraal in the glow of a Rhodesian sunset. Zwaartbooi, the most reliable of my boys, went with us, and helped us to make a rough camp. As it was winter, the nights were, if dry, cold; he built a large fire, beside which all three of us lay down to wait for the lion, Morby and I with our rifles ready. But nothing happened until the mystic hour before dawn.

There was not a sound. The brooding silence of the veldt, which oppresses the heart even in the sensuous light and warmth of a tropical day, in darkness becomes so much more intense as to seem like a menace. The stars, which in South Africa appear to rest in space, the sky immeasurably pure and vast above them, burned like lamps. But now that the fire had died down the earth about us lay in deep shadow, except now and again when a flicker threw our camp into relief with eerie effect. As I watched and thought, I must have dozed.

Suddenly I became subconsciously aware of a strange presence, and of an overpowering presence. I awoke, and opening my eyes, looked straight into those of a lion. He was standing still as if listening, not five paces distant, his noble proportions and head illuminated by a flash of light, as a piece of wood fell into the dying fire and burst into flame. Magnified by short perspective and the eerie darkness, he loomed up as large as an elephant. It would have been death to move, taken unawares as I was. Fortunately for me I did not at first fully understand where I was or what I saw, and when consciousness came with a sickening sense of helplessness I felt Zwaartbooi's warning touch on my arm. We lay as if dead. Then the darkness fell upon us again. The next flicker of the fire showed us that the lion was gone. The relief was immense. He had stood still perhaps a minute, and we had lain quiet not more than five, but to me it seemed that hours had passed.

As I went over the experience in my mind I began to doubt that it was anything but a dream. The lion was much too big for reality, I thought, and even Zwaartbooi seemed uncertain.

'Baas,' he said, 'if that was the spook of the lion, he must have been a great big fellow.'

When daylight came, however, there was his spoor, where he had paused by the fire. He had taken the poisoned tongue and gone off with it to his lair in the kopjes. Morby would have laughed at me for letting the lion get clear away without firing a single shot, only that he had slept peacefully all through the experience which was so exciting to me.

We hunted for the carcass, but to no purpose. What we did find, however, were the remains of a large number of bucks at various places among the kopjes, proving that the poisoned tongue had been eaten with impunity. Then for weeks the lion completely disappeared from the district—we settlers hoped for good. But just as we were beginning to feel safe again as far as our stock was concerned, some of my boys who had been trekking with a string of

donkeys reported that a lion had killed one of them near the homestead. He had not been able to eat his prey, as the boys had disturbed him at the feast. We went over to see it. There it was on the ground, badly clawed on one shoulder, with its neck broken, and the huge spoor of the lion close beside it. I decided to set a trap for him that evening, and later set a piccaninny to watch and to beat off vultures, who were already beginning to scent a possible prey.

Towards sundown I set about my preparations, which had to be carried out with the utmost care, as the lion is one of the most wary of beasts. I first built a 'schem' of thorn bush, high, wide, and close, round the dead donkey, leaving one opening. Across it I stretched a wire fastened to the trigger of an ancient shot-gun, which, of course, was loaded. This I tied securely to two forked sticks driven into the ground in such a manner as to point to the opening of the 'schem.' They were high enough for the gun to rest exactly on a level with the heart of the lion, so that, if fired by his movements, the bullet should strike him dead. It takes time and delicate manipulation before one can set such a trap as this effectively, so that, when I had at last done it to my satisfaction, darkness was falling rapidly, as it always does in Rhodesia after sunset. I therefore started to walk home; but I had hardly covered twenty yards when I heard the shot of the old gun. As I had no rifle with me it was not safe to return to the trap. So I continued on my way.

In the morning I was up early to see the result of my labours the night before. To my delight, in front of the 'schem' lay one of the finest yellow-maned lions I had ever seen. He was in good condition, and in the prime of his lion-hood, a superb creature, majestic even in death. His colour, coat, mane, and claws were perfect. As I looked at him, and marked his massive hindquarters and huge forearm, which denoted immense strength, I realised how he had been able lightly to sling over his shoulder such a heavy weight as an Africander cow, and to leap successfully over a ten-foot fence carrying a three-year-old heifer, which could not have weighed less than five hundred pounds.

He was the last of his kind in our part of the country. After him the big spaces big game love soon began to shrink. We may see a buck occasionally, but his appearance arouses no excitement. With closer settlement life is more comfortable, but it is also tamer.

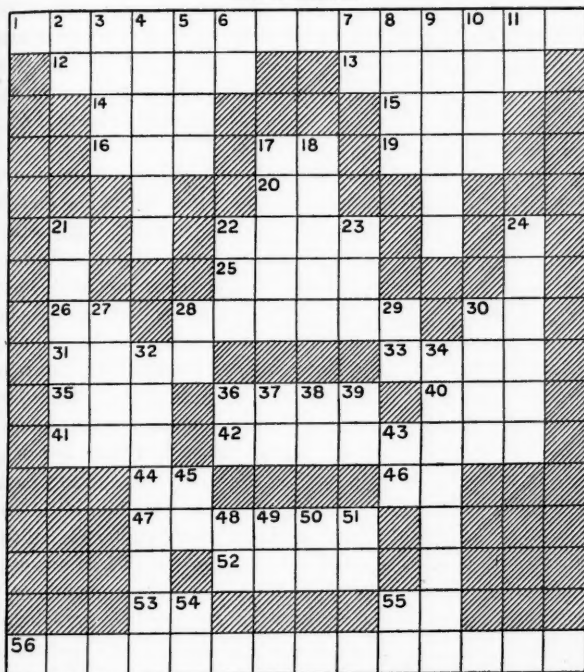
1. N
12. H
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56. N

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4. F
F
THE
chose

LITERARY CROSSWORD.

('WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.')

BY AGRIPPA.



Across.

CLUES.

Down.

1. Name of one of the plays.
2. Hero of one of the plays.
3. Pistol's Latin (in short).
4. Petition.
5. A fool deranged.
6. Atalanta's lesser part.
7. Just not quite right.
8. A villainous nativity.
9. One of a lachrymose family.
10. Roman date of doom.
11. What Falstaff took in his inn.
12. First stage of a murderer (see 34 across).
13. Business.
14. A doctor's daughter.
15. Suffered much from a blue-eyed woman.
16. Fairy.
17. 12 to 12.
18. One of Hotspur's antipathies.
19. Half an answer.
20. Concerning.
21. Name of Ghost in 'Hamlet.'
22. When Banquo walked.
23. The not impossible.
24. Result of 22 down and 28 down.
25. A maid betrayed.
26. First stage of a murderer (see 34 across).
27. A looker-on at chess.
28. Brutus's father-in-law.
29. Greater part of her.
30. Initials of a foolish knight.
31. A doctor's daughter.
32. Owner of hallowed cudgel.
33. Foe (with casualty).
34. Subject of a wager.
35. When Banquo walked.
36. 'Hamlet' name without the head.
37. Authority on the fashions.
38. Last stage of a murderer (see 26 across).
39. Cost of Falstaff's bread.
40. Modern name for Shakespearian instrument.
41. Part of Witches' prescription.
42. One who heard midnight strike.
43. Conjunction.
44. 'Enskied and sainted.'
45. Hostess's exclamation.
46. Porcine head and tail.
47. The shorter of the two.
48. Touchstone's first and last.
49. A nobleman of 48.
50. Initials of another literary man (living).
51. First syllable of several characters.
52. The readers.
53. The readers.
54. Name of one of the plays.
55. Indication of place.
56. Character in 'All's Well' (contracted).
57. The signature in brief.
58. The signature in brief.

Down.

For the first, second and third correct answers to be opened, the Editor of THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE offers each a prize of books to the value of £1, to be chosen from Mr. Murray's catalogue.

RULES.

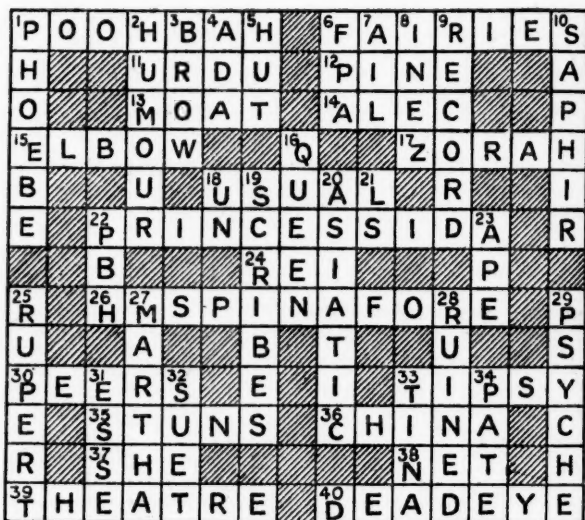
1. With his solution, whether on the printed form or not, every solver must send the coupon which appears on page 10. Only one answer may be sent with each coupon.

2. On his answer the solver must write his name and address.

3. Answers to the Literary Crossword should be written in ink and addressed to the Crossword Editor, The Cornhill Magazine, 50a Albemarle Street, London, W. 1, and must arrive not later than August 20.

4. Solvers who write a second letter to correct a previous answer must send the complete solution as they wish it, and not merely state the desired alteration.

SOLUTION OF 'SAVOY OPERAS' LITERARY CROSSWORD.



CLUES

Across.

1. Poohbah.
11. Urdu.
13. Moat.
15. Elbow.
18. Usual.
24. Rei.
30. Peers.
35. Stuns.
37. She.
39. Theatre.
6. Fairies.
12. Pine.
14. Alec.
17. Zorah.
22. 'Princess Ida.'
26. 'H.M.S. Pinafore.'
33. Topsy.
36. China.
38. Net.
40. Deadeye.

Down.

1. Phoebe.
4. Ada.
7. Ah.
10. Saphir.
19. Scribes.
21. (E)ls(e).
23. Ape.
27. Martha.
29. (Lady) Psyche.
32. Suet.
2. Humour.
5. Hut.
8. Inez.
16. Queen.
20. Asiatic.
22. P(oo)h(b)ah.
25. Rupert.
28. Ruined.
31. Esse.
33. Tina.
34. Pate.

RESULT OF 'SIR WALTER SCOTT' LITERARY CROSSWORD.

The first three correct solutions opened were sent in by Miss B. S. Franey, The Grange, Ely, Cambs; Miss Rootes, 5 Glenfall Terrace, Cheltenham; Miss F. Coote, 26 Marlboro' Buildings, Bath; and they will choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's Catalogue.

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